

PART I

NATIONALISM AND  
DEMOCRACY

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## INTRODUCTION ON NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

By itself, abstractly speaking, the demand (for National Government) is perfectly legitimate, and deserves the support of all democratic Indians. But unless it is given a concrete connotation, it cannot be acted upon. There is more than one difficulty. The greater difficulty is regarding the composition of the National Government. Who would be thought fit to compose the Government so that it could claim the distinction of a National Government? If only formally representative men are to be chosen, and the Government is to be responsible to the present Central Assembly, it must necessarily be a party government, at any rate a coalition of the parties in the Assembly.

But a National Government which can be expected to tackle the critical situation must have a broader basis. It must be a war cabinet with the sole purpose of doing everything necessary to win the war. This function of the National Government must predetermine its personal composition. It lays down the standard of qualification of its prospective members. Judged from this point of view, not many outstanding members of the major parties, and particularly of the Congress, as representatives of their respective parties, can claim that qualification. All of them, again particularly the Congress leaders, have done everything possible to undermine the very possibility of organising a popular resistance which alone could be the effective weapon to defend the country even in this eleventh hour. Congress leaders of the Rajagopalachari school may show a belated-concern for

the defence of the country. But more influential men publicly take up an attitude which smacks of Pétainism.

Is it very patriotic to demand that men holding such views and not making any secret about them, should be entrusted with the destiny of the country in this critical moment? Those who cannot give an affirmative answer to this challenging question should therefore put a different content to the very legitimate demand for a National Government. It should be a government, not responsible to any party caucus. Its members should be chosen not as representatives of this or that party, or of several parties, but to their individual merit. It is insolent to claim a monopoly of patriotism for the members of any one party.

Under the pressure of emergency, party government is becoming obsolete even in England, the home of party government. The members of Mr Churchill's new War Cabinet are not primarily partymen. The Premier himself has always been a sort of Maverick. Sir Stafford Cripps, hailed from all sides as the man of the hour, was expelled from his party and has not yet been taken back. Mr Eden differed with the Conservative Party caucus so very much on the question of international relations, and particularly the relation with the U.S.S.R., that he all but left the party. For the first time, the Cabinet includes a Serviceman with no party affiliation. The party attachment of Sir John Anderson and Captain Lyttleton is vague. Mr Bevin and Major Attlee are the only two partymen, and their orthodoxy is also doubtful.

It is quite possible for India to have a National Government on that model. But a government composed of men of talent, experience, integrity, broad vision

and modern democratic convictions, would hardly satisfy the party leaders, because men possessed of these qualities could be found outside the major parties, and should be preferred for having shown a greater sense of public responsibility, and therefore more reliable as the custodians of the country's destiny in this critical moment.

*(From a Statement issued to the press on Feb. 25, 42)*

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## AN APPEAL TO THE FRIENDS OF INDIA IN BRITAIN

India figured prominently in the parliamentary debate on the war situation. But the vehement critics of the Government's Indian policy seemed to be woefully ignorant of the state of affairs in this country. I am not an apologist of the Government. I have been serving, for a whole lifetime, the cause of Indian freedom, first as an extremist nationalist and then as a Communist. Therefore, the prospect of India being granted freedom gladdens my heart. Nevertheless, my devotion to the cause of Indian freedom compels me to tell that the policy advocated by the well meaning, but ill informed friends of India in Britain, if adopted, may have disastrous effects. It may be instrumental in handing India over to the Japanese invader. From the very beginning of this war, as a Communist, I maintained that victory of the Axis Powers would seriously prejudice the cause of Indian freedom, and that therefore India should do anything and everything to prevent that. But at the same time, I insisted all along that, in order to increase the defensive and striking power of India, the Government must be democratised, the country rapidly industrialised and the entire people militarised. So, the demand for a National Government has my fullest support. But the crucial question is Who are to compose the National Government? Some people in Britain seem to believe that transfer of power to the Congress will solve the Indian problem. I shall not now describe all the difficulties besetting that simplified procedure. That could be all disregarded if the Congress really the monolithic party that it claims to be, which howe

is not the case. But there is one difficulty which can be disregarded only at the risk of Indian freedom. That is a positive danger. I wish to inform the friends of India in Britain that a National Government, composed of, or controlled by, their idols in this country would set India on the path of Petainism. It is now useless to discuss who is responsible for having created this unfortunate situation. We shall have to face the fact as it is.

Mr. Gandhi's view about what a country should do in case of an invasion is well known. He is still the supreme dictator of the Congress, and Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru is a complete convert to his creed. In a speech in Calcutta on February 21, he referred to the possibility of the Congress being called upon to shoulder the responsibility of the government of the country. Then he said: "The responsibility may come to us any day and any moment, when it will be too late to raise an army for effective defence. If the war has proved anything, it has proved that ineffective resistance is the greatest folly. Spending money on ineffective defence is waste of money. From the practical point of view, what we could do, is that we must not surrender. It is no question of stopping an invading army. Certainly we are not going to be the tools of the British."

Is it desirable that men holding such views and not making any secret about them, should be entrusted with the destiny of the country in this critical moment? The Congress leaders have all but ruined the political life of this country, and ruined themselves also. They should no longer be boosted as the saviours of India, the only incorruptible custodians of the interests of the Indian

masses Narrow minded nationalism and spitefulness, born of impotence and frustration, are actually driving them towards the betrayal of the ideals they are believed to cherish We do want a National Government, but it should be composed not of these politically bankrupt popular heroes, but of other men of talent, experience, integrity, broad vision and modern democratic convictions-those who have shown greater sense of public responsibility, and therefore are more reliable as custodians of the country's destiny in this critical moment

February 26, 1942

## I

What appears to be a belated wisdom on the part of the Congress leaders, cannot be quite reassuring for those who have all along anticipated the present extremely dangerous position, and advised precautionary measures well ahead of time.

In the first place, there is room for doubt about the immediate cause of the apparent change of attitude regarding the question of defence. If it is the imminence of invasion, then the wisdom is much too belated, and as such may not save the country. Nevertheless, hoping against hope, it should be welcomed and encouraged. But the apparent change of attitude may just as well be a political manoeuvre. It is hoped that substantial concessions will be offered in the coming declaration of the British Government. Should the Congress still continue the policy of 'all or nothing', the British Government may no longer be accomodating as it can ill afford to do now. It will have to find other ways for democratising war efforts—ways which were open to it all the time, but were shunned owing to the constitutional scruples on the part of the authorities, who could afford that luxury because they did not believe that India would ever be seriously threatened. The practical politicians among the Congress leaders fear that, in such an eventuality, they would be at a great disadvantage. Therefore, they are anxious that, whatever may be coming, should not be allowed to go to others. On the other hand, whatever concession may be made to the political bargainers, would presumably be in return for

an unreserved readiness on the part of the latter to subordinate all other considerations, demands, or fads, to the supreme task of doing everything to win the war. The remarkable change in the tone of the Congress leaders may be due to these considerations.

Secondly, whatever may be the immediate cause of the change, the establishment of a National Government, controlled by parties, cannot be expected to improve the situation. The military position cannot be substantially improved overnight simply by a change of the government. Indeed, the defense of India is not a simple military problem. It is much less so today than ever before since this war broke out. We have all along visualised it as very largely a psychological problem. The solution of the problem of Indian defense is conditional upon a change in the popular view regarding how India will be affected by the outcome of the war. The view is that a victory of the Axis Powers will be beneficial for India. It has been promoted and propagated by the policy pursued by the Congress since the war broke out. Therefore, a National Government, as demanded by the Congress, could hardly be relied upon to create the basic condition for a successful defense assuming that it would try to do so. Ceremoniously proclaimed convictions on the part of the Congress leaders as well as their very recent pronouncements should preclude any such assumption.

The other day, Mr. Rajagopalachari exclaimed: "What is wanted now is action that can light the fire of enthusiasm and create a situation in which political aspirations and self-defense become one and the same thing". The impression sought to be conveyed is that, as soon as the British Government would behave as the

penitent sinner and transfer real power to Indians like Mr. Rajagopalachari, the fire of enthusiasm would begin to burn in the Indian people, who would immediately realise the responsibility of self-defense. Those who know the amount of mischief done by the propaganda of the Congress leaders, cannot be impressed by such rhetorics.

Only three days before he indulged in the rhetorics, addressing a public meeting at Tiruvannamalai, Mr. Rajagopalachari said: "I have heard an argument urged very seriously and earnestly by some people that it would be dangerous now to make an enemy of Japan. It means that we should cringe to these invaders and deceive them into good treatment. It is dangerous, dishonourable and futile."

Ever since he changed his mind about India's relation to the war (assuming that there is a change), Mr. Rajagopalachari has more than once found it necessary to make publicly similar remarks, which he would not do unless the view criticised was very widespread, and held in the higher circles of the Congress.

In the same speech, he referred to yet another outstanding feature of the prevailing popular mentality, which would make it very difficult for him to light the fire of enthusiasm. It would be very difficult *for him*, because in the self-same speech he hinted that the defense of India by a National Government might not be, need not be, anything more serious than the token defense of Thailand.

In the Tiruvannamalai speech, he said: "It is then asked by some: we are weak and without weapons; what is the good of resistance against a powerful enemy invasion? This also is an ill-considered thought."

Was he perchance breaking a lance with Pandit Nehru who, addressing a Congress workers' meeting in Calcutta on February 21, said : "The responsibility might come to us—it might come any day and any moment—when it would be too late to raise an army for effective defense. If the war has proved anything, it has proved that ineffective resistance is the greatest folly. Spending money on ineffective defense is waste of money. From the practical point of view, what we could do is that we must not surrender. It is no question of stopping the invading army."

While appearing to disagree with the Pandit's defeatism, dressed up in a cheap romantic garb, Mr. Rajagopalachari visualised a more glorious perspective. He said. "What does it matter who wins or fails. If unfortunately we fail, and we are left to ourselves to make peace with the aggressor, even then it is not impossible to achieve peace on honourable terms."

Perhaps that is supposed to be realism as against the romanticism of the Pandit, who must always play up to the gallery of an ill informed world. Only, Rajagopalachari's realism is also based upon an illusion which, in its turn, is the result of his known views about social and political values. He evidently believes that Japan can be appeased ; that the Axis Powers are more reasonable, sympathetic to the political aspirations of India, than British Imperialism. Korea, Manchukuo, the Nanking Government of China, and recently Indo China and Thailand, have achieved peace with the Japanese invader on "honourable" terms ! There is no reason to expect that the Japanese would treat India any better. Therefore, Mr. Rajagopalachari's hope of achieving peace with the Japanese invader on honourable terms after a

token defense on the Thai model, will not be fulfilled unless "we should cringe to these invaders and deceive them into good treatment". Yet, earlier in the same speech, he condemned those who advocated a policy which would lead India to this dishonourable position. Evidently, the change of attitude is only apparent, and cannot be reassuring.

The doubts and misgivings about the motive of what is obviously a political manoeuvre, deepen when one remembers what was said by these gentlemen, who would be at the helm of the affairs of the country at this juncture. As late as February 15, addressing a public meeting at Chitoor, Mr. Rajagopalachari said: "If we are free, it may not be even necessary to fight. If we are made free, there is no cause for jealousy for Japan or Germany. Not only that Japan will not be jealous of us, but Japan will have no reason to be jealous of England herself."

The belief in the possibility of appeasing Japan is evidently there. 'Leave us alone, and we shall easily come to terms with Japan.' On that assumption, it is maintained that the establishment of a National Government with real power—to make war or peace—will solve the problem of Indian defense. At the back of the mind is the belief that Japan—or Germany, for that matter—has no quarrel with India. She does not want to invade India. She only wants to cripple the power of Britain. So, let Britain clear out, or at least hand over her Indian business to a Managing Agency, with the full power of attorney, and Japan will be appeased. This naive belief, which ignores recent history and the cause of Japanese expansionism, results from the illusion about racial solidarity, and is nourished with the lying propaganda about

Japan's mission of liberating the Asiatic peoples from the domination of the white race .

It is worse than the illusion of racial solidarity, which could be excused as a nationalist prejudice. A National Government would be able to appease Germany also. So, there is no irreconcilable antagonism between the ideas and ideals of Indian Nationalism and those of the Axis Powers. Otherwise, such an easy possibility of appeasement, coming to terms, could not be visualised. Indeed, according to Mr Rajagopalachari, there is no such antagonism. He made that very clear in his Convocation Address at the Lucknow University

Let us trace the thread of ideas a little farther back, and then reach the source of inspiration—to wonder if the Leopard can ever change spots

In the statement made during his trial, Rajagopalachari said "The British Government has dragged India in the war without asking her Legislature. All other parts of the British Commonwealth were allowed the choice of remaining neutral, irrespective of the causes and motives of the war. The Legislative Assembly of the province (Madras) passed by an overwhelming majority a resolution claiming the right of India to be neutral." He then contended that action, for which he was prosecuted, was in pursuance of the verdict of the Legislature claiming the right of India to remain neutral.

With the invader right on the frontiers, it is no longer possible to talk about neutrality. The choice is between capitulation and resistance. It would be shameful to demand freedom to capitulate. Hence the change of attitude, which is nevertheless characterised by the outspoken willingness to come to terms with the invaders.

The guiding motive, as well as principle, of the policy which would now be practised if power was transferred to the Congress leaders and their kind, was clearly stated by the Mahatma towards the end of 1940. He wrote: "We should be impartial. If we help the war efforts, we really come more under their (British) sway than we are to-day. And if, inspite of our help, they lose, we would then come under the rule of another foreign Power. If India and Britain were jointly defeated, she would be jumping from the frying pan into the fire".

It is remarkable how Mr. Rajagopalachari scrupulously—and cleverly, which is not done by others—follows the injunction of the Master, even when he plays the dissenter. He thinks that willingness to co-operate, waving off previously made conditions, might place the Congress leaders in the position to avoid a joint defeat with Britain by coming to terms with the invader.

We are not imputing motives. We are not even drawing inferences which may be regarded as far-fetched. We are simply emphasising what Mr. Rajagopalachari himself is saying even to-day in a slightly veiled language.

This apparently changed attitude falls completely in line with the prevailing desire of short-sighted nationalism to come to terms with Japan—or Nazi Germany, if she had appeared on the scene earlier. A National Government, composed of, controlled by, men with such an attitude, would not brighten the chances of Indian defense. On the contrary, it would necessarily legalise, if not actually promote and protect, the activities of the enemy's Fifth Column on the pretext of defending "civil liberties".

Daily events happening in Bengal recently show how considerations of party politics necessarily compel the Government to do or tolerate strange things. Mr Suhhas Bose has joined the Axis Powers. We need no longer rely on surmise or any official statements. He has spoken himself. The Forward Bloc still follows his lead. Yet it is represented on the present Coalition Government of Bengal. Mr Sarat Bose was arrested on the order of the Central Government. The Bengal Government promised to secure his release. Before long, it gave up the effort. Presumably, the Central Government possessed convincing reasons for its action. Nevertheless, almost every day one or the other member of the Government Coalition raises in the Legislative Assembly the question of Mr Sarat Bose's release. If it was in the power of the Provincial Government, he would be out long ago. Assuming that his arrest took place for sufficient reasons, his release, for the sake of party politics, would be prejudicial to the defense of the country.

Congress leaders, from the Mahatma downwards, have vehemently condemned the Orissa Ministry for some arrests under the Defense of India Act. It is maintained that the arrests were made for weakening the Congress party in the Assembly. That may or may not be the case. The crucial question, however, is whether the arrested persons did commit any offense under the Defense of India Act. Those condemning the arrests carefully avoid the question. If the Congress was in power, these persons would be released, so that the non Congress Ministry could be overthrown, even if their release would be putting a premium on activities prejudicial to the defense of the country.

The obvious inference to be made from these and many similar facts is that, under a National Government, the Defense of India Act would no longer be in operation, if not formally repealed. There would be no check on anti-war propaganda and Fifth Column activities. That ideal state of absolutely unrestricted civil liberties, in the midst of a war, the issues of which are being joined inside every country, cannot be very conducive for defense. unless it is assumed that the entire popular mentality would radically change as soon as a National Government, composed of erstwhile war-resisters and pacifists, was set up. Even a superficial knowledge of the situation in the country does not allow such assumption. Instead of changing, the present popular mentality, created by an ill-conceived nationalist propaganda, will aggravate under legal protection, and will eventually provide the National Government with the moral pretext for the predetermined capitulation. The "Government of the people" must bow before the people's will! In reality spitefulness, prejudice and Fascist sympathy on the part of a vocal minority will deliver the Indian people to the tender mercies of the ruthless invaders.

The fact that there is a widespread Fascist sympathy and desire for a victory of the Axis Powers in this country cannot be disputed, because they are hardly concealed. They are freely talked in the bazaar and in the streets, not to mention places where intimate conversations and confidential discussions take place. They provide not only a fertile field, but a moral sanction for Fifth Column activities. The National Government would ignore them. Thus, it would begin the defense of the country by removing all watch on the most vulnerable and decisive home front. The effectiveness of such a half-hearted or

amateurish defense is very doubtful. It is bound to be a token resistance, to end in the frankly desired peace with the invader, and an invader never offers honourable terms. He takes all the trouble to invade a country only with the purpose of conquering it.

These doubts and misgivings about the most probable performance of the National Government, to be formed by the war resisters and pacifists of yesterday, are caused by their own pronouncements, even of to-day. We express them with the forlorn hope that they may be dispelled by some convincing proof of a real change of heart. We shall be only too glad to be convinced. Meanwhile, it remains the unpleasant duty of the watchful sentinel of popular welfare to sound the alarm. It may not be heeded, and be stifled by a powerful combination of panic, stupidity and reaction, but we shall have the satisfaction of having done our duty. That satisfaction will give us the courage to wait patiently for what appears to be an inevitable calamity.

March 15, 1942

## II

To the bargaining politicians, the coming visit of Sir Stafford Cripps may hold out a cheering or discouraging prospect, according to their respective reading of the Prime Minister's declaration. But those with no axe to grind, or who are not in search of a face-saving device, must be seriously perturbed by this delay in meeting the very urgent need of giving India a strong War Cabinet, composed of popular men who would subordinate all other considerations to the sole purpose of defending the country against the imminent invasion. When every day counts, the delay is bound to be dangerous. The Japanese would not wait until Sir Stafford Cripps has finished his doubtful mission of making yet another effort to placate the politicians who, during these fateful two years and more, have shown such a deplorable short-sightedness and a singular lack of the sense of public responsibility.

We cannot help feeling that those responsible for the defense of India still do not realise fully the gravity and urgency of the situation. It seems that on this occasion Mr. Churchill has failed to act with his usual forthrightness, and this remiss may be fatal. It is difficult to see what will be gained by this delay, assuming that nothing very serious will happen in the meantime.

If it is true that Sir Stafford Cripps is bringing a "final" proposal regarding the British Government's "present and future actions" about India, then there is no room for any negotiations. It can also be gathered from the Prime Minister's declaration that the final

proposal is substantially, on principle, more or less on the lines of the offer made in August 1940. Presumably, such an offer will not secure the co-operation of the Congress leaders, unless Sir Stafford Cripps' power of persuasion and personal influence will succeed in making them climb down, which would certainly be very prejudicial for their precious prestige.

Indeed, a section of the Congress press has smelt rats and is thundering anathema. If Sir Stafford Cripps is coming with free hand to negotiate, as hoped in Congress circles, then the immediate result of his visit will be a barrage of bombastic statements and counter statements about issues and demands which, however important and legitimate by themselves, will only create a greater confusion regarding the supreme task of the moment. The political atmosphere will be thick with voluminous expressions of sympathy for China, the Soviet Union and even for the progressive elements in accursed Britain and America, news agencies will gratify credulous readers abroad with reports that Indian national leaders are burning with the zeal to fight Fascism; meanwhile, the latter will exclaim with pathos "Give us freedom or give us death!" The net result of this spectacular performance will be encouragement for Fifth Column activities with the moral sanction and convenient pretext of patriotism. Apparently plausible questions, such as why should we defend a country which does not belong to us, and how can we fight for other's freedom when freedom is denied to us? will thinly veil the jubilation over the Japs coming soon to put an end to the present regime, if not actually to liberate India. The invaders, now at the very gates of the country, will know how to utilise the conditions of uncertainty, and the

popular disposition in their favour, which will be even more pronounced owing to the passionate outbursts of nationalist leaders during the negotiations. So, on the whole, the delay necessary for no other purpose, will only be helpful for the enemy. The immediate object of the "scheme" is clearly defined in the Prime Minister's declaration. It is "to promote concentration of all thoughts and energy upon the defense of the native soil." That is the object of all who are anxious to defend the future of India against the danger of Fascist domination. If all the parties accepted this position without any reservation, at least for the moment, there would be an end to all the "fierce constitutional and communal disputes". They have persistently refused to do so. The hope of securing their co-operation on the basis of a definite offer, thns, would seem to be rather a forlorn hope.

The apprehension expressed in the passage—"We should ill serve the common cause, if we made a declaration which would be rejected by the essential elements in the Indian world"—indicates that the British Government is doubtful whether, even in this eleventh hour, "when the enemy is at the gates of India", the party politicians would have the sense of public responsibility. Why, then, run after them still in these extremely critical days, and regard them as the "essential elements"? It is hardly wise to waste weeks and months in coaxing and cajoling such irresponsible people, when events are moving so very swiftly.

The dangerous delay is due to an erroneous judgment regarding who and what are the "main" or "essential" elements in "Indian national life". The Government seems to be terrorised by the vocal politicians, who have

persistently refused to be influenced by any other considerations than narrow nationalist and communalist interests. That shows their failure to appreciate the gravity of the immediate issue, or indifference in that respect. It is a caricature of democracy or constitutionalism to regard them as the sole makers of India's destiny.

The Australian paper "Sidney Morning Herald" has correctly made the following observation "The panic policy of abandoning a vast and diversified country to the clamorous National Congress would raise more troubles than it would solve."

In the Prime Minister's declaration, minorities, depressed classes, the States and "lesser matters" are particularly mentioned. The bulk of the population—the toiling masses—is completely out of the picture, which is clouded with political and communalist organisations, controlled by vocal minorities and concerned only with the protection and promotion of vested interests. It is a veritable case of not seeing the forest for the trees.

The bulk of the Indian people is not enfranchised; so, it is not right to assume that their interests are represented or their will expressed by the party which won the last election, and may once again secure the support of a majority of the present electorate. The India of the toiling millions, who, engrossed with the baffling problem of sheer physical existence, can have no active or intelligent concern with political, religious or communal bickerings, are completely forgotten. The really essential elements—those comparatively few who can think rationally and are actuated by larger considerations and bigger issues—are similarly treated.

The anxiety lest the offer of the British Government be not "accepted by India as a whole" ignores the stark

reality of the fundamental issue of this war. India, like any other country, is divided on that issue. The crucial test is the unreserved readiness and firm determination to subordinate all other considerations to the supreme common task of concentrating all thoughts and energy to defeat the Axis Powers militarily, and Fascism politically. Only those who can stand this test constitute the "essential elements." They alone can rally the forces (*not all* the forces) of Indian life which *can be* rallied "to defend their land from the menace of the invader", that is, on the international anti-Fascist People's Front. All the forces cannot be rallied for the same purpose. Because, not only as regards Fascism, but even on the burning question of invasion, Indian opinion is divided, and the number of those in favour of both is considerable. Knowledge of these realities should determine the policy to be adopted.

It is reported that a considerable volume of British opinion in the parliament as well as in the country at large, while generally supporting the decision of the Government, would have preferred bolder action. They believe that any attempt to reconcile all parties in India to any given policy by negotiation is a fore-doomed failure.

The apprehension about the reaction to the proposal to be conveyed by Sir Stafford Cripps indicates that it will not satisfy the bargaining politicians, whose co-operation the Government is so very anxious to secure. Why, then, delay the adoption of the only sound and practical policy, which must be adopted if India is to be saved. It could be adopted immediately, avoiding the dangerous delay, which may be fatal.

What is urgently needed to meet the situation effectively, is the formation of a strong War Cabinet composed

of popular public men, chosen on their individual merits, such as are ready to promote the concentration of all thoughts and energy upon the defense of the native soil, and who would not wait for any promise, declaration or offer from the British Government In these fateful days, the cause of India's political progress and general welfare can be promoted only by far sighted patriots who realise that the national interests of India cannot be separated from the fate of the rest of the world, and that therefore the future of India is conditional upon the defeat of the forces of evil bent upon the destruction, which have laid down a solid foundation for a new order of greater freedom and equality

India is not wanting in such patriots A government composed of men chosen from among them will be a truly national government as well as a strong government, which the country needs so very urgently in this great crisis

Practical promotion of the welfare of the people is the essence of democracy Defeat of the Axis Powers and destruction of the evil of Fascism, which has become an international phenomenon, not leaving India untouched, are the conditions for the future welfare of mankind, which includes the Indian nation Therefore, a government which would set aside all other considerations for concentrating all energy and resources on the crucial task of winning this war, would be a truly democratic government And a National Government is not worth having, it may even be a fraud, if it is not a democratic government By applying itself to this task with a single minded purpose, it will be representing the will of the Indian masses, who would suffer untold misery if Fascism triumphed.

India's right of self-determination has been recognised. Indians must know how to exercise that right. A National Government, free from any party control, will be able to take concrete steps in that direction, and thus prove itself to be the most trustworthy and representative guardian to the welfare of the Indian people. The fundamental principles of a democratic Constitution, suitable for the outstanding peculiarities of the conditions of this country, can be formulated, and the people then given the opportunity and all the facilities to express their considered opinion about them. Thus, a freely given, intelligent, popular sanction can be made available for the skeleton of a generally agreed Constitution.

Such a Constitution, framed with the consent and active participation of the entire people, under the initiative and guidance of a truly National Government, alone can establish in India the democratic freedom for which the progressive forces throughout the world are fighting. But it will not be available for India, if she fails to contribute readily to the common victory in that historic fight. The immediate need for India, therefore, is the establishment of a government which will boldly and unswervingly do everything necessary, so that she can discharge her responsibility creditably.

It was open for the British Government to help the establishment of such a government in India immediately. That would obviously have been helpful in every respect. It is highly deplorable that, instead of taking that only sensible and practical step, the British Government has allowed itself to be misled in a policy which inevitably means a dangerous delay in taking the most urgently needed measures for the defense of India.

March 22, 1942

appeasement with the invader on such pretext as 'a non belligerent India will be a greater asset for Britain' or 'to spend money on ineffective resistance is waste of money' The responsibility of defending India as a sector of the world war front will not be discharged if any mistake is made in the choice of the personnel of the Indian Government to be constituted according to the new plan

There should be no underestimation of the all important time factor The new offer of action for the present should be immediately implemented, whatever may be the attitude of the political hagglers The gamble with the fate of India should not continue indefinitely, particularly, in the face of the danger that if India falls, she may drag the whole world with her down in the Fascist hell Bold steps and drastic actions are needed The choice is between a few thousand vocal politicians, whose thoughts are warped by false sentiments and preconceived notions, and whose vision is blurred by deceptive appearances, and the four hundred millions of people who live in this country Once the obstacles are removed and a favourable atmosphere is created, the masses of the people can be mobilised for the defense of the country

But that cannot be done so long as there will be impunity for covert or overt actions for poisoning the popular mind and misleading the masses by whipping up primitive emotions, such as distrust, hatred and spitefulness There could hardly be any mistake in making the choice on which depends the very possibility of defending India

Yet we cannot help expressing the apprehension that the present action suggested in the British Government's

declaration may be stultified by a mechanical practice of democracy. The apprehension is aggravated by the fact that even the future of India is visualised within the limitations of that practice. While admitting on principle the right of India's self-determination, to the fullest extent, the declaration of the British Government suggests a procedure which is hardly democratic. The right to determine the future of the country is conceded to a small fraction of its population. The present electorate does not embrace the vast bulk of the population. If Provincial Legislative Assemblies, elected on such a narrow basis, will function as the electoral college for the constitution-making body, the voice of the producing masses will not be heard while the future of India will be settled. A constitution framed under such circumstances can hardly be a really democratic constitution. A constitution framed by such a body will inevitably create a State which will be an instrument in the hands of the native upper classes.

This obviously undemocratic procedure is recommended presumably to please the Congress, which to-day is in a position to sway a majority of the present electorate. Unless there will be some radical readjustment of the relation of forces in the political life of the country, the Congress may get a majority in the next election again. So, Congressmen will be in a dominating position in the constitution-making body. They are thus recognised as the makers of the future of India. Presumably, it is hoped that the recognition would placate them, and their co-operation might be available for the present. No true democrat would approve of this mortgaging of the future of the Indian people.

However, we are of the opinion that it is premature to discuss now the procedure of the Indian people exercising the right of self determination. The Indians are given the option to adopt an alternative procedure. We are sure that they would do so, provided that at the present they do not become victims of a mechanical practice of democracy, which might prejudice their whole future.

It is idle to plan the future when the present is in danger. We are not concerned with any promise, however liberal, about the future of India. We believe that the future of India rests with the Indian people and, for the moment, it is in the lap of the War God. We are anxious about the present, and earnestly hope that the courage and foresight for taking immediately the requisite action will not be wanting.

Nationalism is an antiquated cult. The freedom that the masses of the Indian people want and must have, cannot be attained to a nationalist isolation. Therefore, only such people as can rise above the narrow nationalist outlook, and visualise a free India as a part of a free world, a member of a brotherhood of nations, are qualified to be the organisers of present action. The sooner they are called to their posts, which they alone can fill with credit, the brighter will be the chances of defending India as a sector of the world war front.

April 5, 1942

## IV

Our contention that nationalism is an antiquated cult has been borne out by recent nationalist behaviour. A conclusion drawn from an analysis of the history of India during the two years since the outbreak of the war can now be reaffirmed empirically.

We maintained that the validity of nationalism should be tested by the ability to attain its object, and, on the basis of analytical examination of nationalist behaviour, expressed the apprehension that nationalism was going to defeat its own end. Indian nationalism has not been able to stand the test, and consequently has brought the country to the position of jumping from the frying pan into the fire. And should that calamity take place, those responsible for it would try to justify themselves by invoking national honour and dignity.

In their misdirected zeal for defending those abstract and therefore empty ideals, they are disregarding the imminent danger of India being overrun by the Japanese invaders. The less passionate, who are more concerned with concrete realities, therefore, must be perturbed by the question whether it is honourable and dignified to be passive spectators of that calamity.

In these critical days, when India's future hangs precariously in the balance, it is not permissible to mince words. The issue is very simple. It should not be confused or mystified by irrelevant or impractical considerations. The nationalist leaders, now engaged in political bargaining on the plausible pretext of vindicating the honour and dignity of the nation, should give a straight.

answer to a straight question. There should be no equivocation. The question is what do they propose to do if the plan of the British Government is not amended as they demand? In a slightly different form the question was always before them. It was the question of a choice between the continuation of the status quo, and a new conqueror. If before, there was little ground for any mistake in the choice, now there is even less. Because, it is no longer the continuation of the status quo, which will be very considerably changed if the offer of the British Government is accepted. However, the national leaders have been all along begging the question about the wisdom of courting a change of masters. Now that cannot be done on any pretext. It has become a matter of touch and go.

The British proposals may not satisfy them. But do they expect the Japanese to give India more power and greater freedom? They could not possibly take up their reckless attitude except with that expectation. The more charitable opinion will be that they are risking the future of the nation for their own prestige. A cult which culminates in such ego-centrism is evidently dangerous for the welfare of the nation.

If the Congress leaders and their allies were not obsessed with the self stultifying cult of nationalism, they could easily see that the so called Cripps proposals might become the basis for a positive political action. They could create conditions not only for fruitful co-operation to mutual benefit, but for the establishment of a really democratic régime in India upon the removal of the very serious threat to the very prospect of her freedom.

India's right of self determination is recognised without reservation. So, the demand of the Congress

is essentially fulfilled. It is now left to the Indians to devise the ways and means for exercising the right. The regrettable failure to declare that the fundamental democratic right of self-determination belongs equally to the peoples of the Indian States can be easily remedied in due course of time. Given good will on both sides, the baffling problem of the relation between the Hindus and Muslims can be solved to mutual satisfaction along the lines suggested in the proposals. Not only India's right of self-determination has been recognised, but the right has been granted to the major components of the Indian people. We have always maintained that only on that basis can the communal problem be solved. If the right of self-determination is the fundamental principle of democracy, there should be no limit to the right. Therefore, the proposal, in so far as it outlines the future Constitution of India, should be acceptable to all who wish that India as a whole should enjoy truly democratic freedom.

The interim arrangement also is as satisfactory as it could be under the given circumstances. The vagueness of the proposal as regards the immediate transfer of power has been criticised. Indeed, it is vague. But exactly therein lies its merit. Indian statesmanship could give it the desired shape by constructive efforts.

Although the interim arrangement will be formally within the limits of the present Constitution, it has been made clear during discussions that practically the entire administration will be handed over to Indians. Any immediate amendment of the present Constitution would be a negation of the recognised right of India's self-determination, because that could be done only by the British

Parliament, which abdicates its authority over India through the proposals of the British Government.

Even in the sphere of defense, a very wide scope is given to Indian leadership, initiative and creativeness. While "direction of the defense of India as part of their world war effort" is reserved for the British War Cabinet, "the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India". There is very little ambiguity in this declaration. The task of militarising the people of India is left in Indian hands. That means honour as well as power. To raise a large modern army, to find resources for equipping it, to build industries for the purpose, and every other thing to be done in that connection, will evidently be within the power of the Government of India, which will be composed of Indians. It is only a matter of common sense that, should the power and freedom be devoted to the immediate purpose of winning the war, there would be no obstruction.

That being the case, there should be no occasion for all this bargaining, which only causes delay when every day brings the danger of invasion nearer to India.

Sober elder statesmen like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru have been no less vehement than the Congress leaders in demanding an honourable settlement. Sir Tej Bahadur also is critical about the Cripps proposals. Nevertheless, in the statement jointly issued with Mr M. R. Jaykar, he writes "We realise that the transfer of absolute control over defense at the present moment, when it is necessary that there should be unity of direction and control of military policy, would not be in the best interest of England and India. While we appreciate the

necessity of unity of policy and control in matters of defense, we think that the appointment of an Indian Member in charge of Defense, working in close association and co-operation with the War Cabinet, and willing to accept expert advice, will be taken, at this stage, as an unmistakable token of the reality of the transfer of such power and as a symbol of confidence."

So it is only a matter of prestige. The difficulties which result from the fact that India is a sector of the world war front and the Indian army, therefore, is an integral part of a larger force, are realised. Only a formal concession is demanded. There may be some weight in the argument that the British Government should not hesitate to make this formal concession. But it may be asked with equal pertinence: why does the other side insist on such a formal concession on the threat of taking up an attitude of non-co-operation, which under the present circumstances will amount to an indifference to the danger of India being overrun by the Japanese invaders? Is it permissible that the future of Indian freedom should be jeopardised for such a frivolous reason, even when it is almost within reach?

The Congress leaders may be asking for more than the Liberals. In that case, their responsibility is still greater. Instead of utilising, for the immediate purpose, the power actually available, they are demanding greater power, which may not be indispensable just at this moment. If the attitude of the British Government implies lack of confidence in the Indian leaders, the unreasonable and extravagant policy of the Congress leaders must arouse suspicion in all who are primarily concerned with the task of resisting the Japanese invasion

of India, which will take place as a part of a concerted offensive of the Axis Powers.

It may be ill conceived patriotism, or a matter of prestige. Whatever it may be, it spells disaster for India and a great menace for the freedom of the world. Indian nationalists may claim the right to let their country be overrun by the Japanese. But other Powers, engaged in the task of combating the greatest menace to the future of the world, cannot allow that to happen for purely military strategical reasons. The Soviet Union, for example, is the avowed and uncompromising champion of the freedom of all nations. But even the Soviet Government could hardly be expected to insist that the Indian nationalists should have the freedom to act in a way which might endanger the defense of a vital sector of the world war front.

The freedom of one country can now be attained or defeated in national isolation, strictly according to nationalist prejudices. Therefore, the insistence on subordinating all other considerations to that of the prestige of nationalist leaders is bound to do incalculable harm to the cause of Indian freedom. Indeed, having regard for the recent pronouncements of Congress leaders, one cannot but apprehend that, even if some concession is made to their prestige, they would not whole heartedly apply themselves to the task of defending India as a sector of the world war front.

The freedom they demand should include the freedom to make peace with the invader. This suggestion has actually been made in course of discussions with Sir Stafford Cripps. We are not concerned with the British reaction to this suggestion. But from our point of view,

from the point of view of democratic freedom and progress of the Indian people, we must say that even to suggest the idea of making peace with any of the Axis Powers is simply atrocious. Anyone who can contemplate that idea, does not realise the gravity of the situation, and therefore he may have his own idea of patriotism or prestige, but cannot have any share in guiding the destinies of the country in these crucial days.

If the Congress leaders wanted power and freedom to mobilise the Indian people in order to resist Japanese invasion, as a part of the world struggle against Fascism, they could find enough of that freedom and power within the framework of the plan suggested by the British Government. The rejection of that plan on any pretext, be that patriotism or prestige, must be regarded as evidence of other intentions. Therefore, there is absolutely no purpose in pursuing these negotiations with them, which may terminate before this appears in print. But we must express the apprehension that the defense of India against Fascism coming from outside or growing inside the country will be seriously prejudiced, if men, obsessed with the antiquated and self-stultifying cult of nationalism are placed in uncontrolled power, either upon their acceptance of the original offer or a formally amended version of it.

April 12, 1942

## V

Our doubts about the usefulness of the Cripps mission have been borne out. We warned that the hope of the mission succeeding was a forlorn hope. Even more time has been wasted than originally feared. The danger involved in this delay, therefore, may be proportionately greater, unless bold steps and drastic measures are taken to cope with the situation.

It would be hypocritical liberalism to say that there is no use apportioning blame. Because, it is evident that a settlement has been prevented only by the intransigence of the Congress leaders. Had they taken up a positive attitude, the Muslim League would have followed suit. The revised formula regarding the control of the Defense Department should have satisfied all who are really anxious to mobilise the Indian people to resist invasion. Clarifying what was implicit in the original proposal, the revised formula pointed out that the Government of India would have all the powers to raise a People's Militia and organise Home Guards. With that power, any Government would be the dominating and decisive factor in the defense of the country, even if the control of the regular army remained with the Commander in Chief not formally responsible to it. But the Congress leaders did not want a settlement unless it would serve their purpose, which evidently is something different from the defense of the country.

Their record and recent pronouncements left little room for doubt about what they would do if placed in power. They wanted power not to wage the war, but

to choose between war and peace. It is evidently a very perilous venture to place at the helm of affairs men who even now have not made their choice. Had the choice been made, no serious reason could be found to reject the proposal for an interim arrangement, after three weeks of protracted negotiations.

The British War Cabinet seems to have been fully alive to the danger involved in the attempted appeasement. Otherwise, there would be no occasion for a breakdown of the negotiations. Some concession regarding the control of Defense would have crowned the Cripps mission with success. The refusal to go that far shows that even the peace-makers entertained doubts and misgivings about what the Congress leaders might do, if in possession of unrestricted power. What, then, was the sense of all this coaxing and cajoling, which only bloated up the political bargainers sitting on the fence.

If it was felt that co-operation of the Congress leaders was essential for the defense of India, any price should have been paid for it. On the other hand, if it was felt that it would be unwise to place everything in their hand, then there should have been no attempt at appeasement. The Congress leaders never made any secret of their wish to make peace with the invaders, and actually hoped that could be done on honourable terms.

There was no question of distrust. It was a matter of precaution warranted by the publicly expressed views of the Congress leaders. There would be no restriction of the power to develop the defensive and striking potentialities of India to the highest pitch. The Congress refusal to accept even the revised British offer, therefore, proves that power is demanded for a different purpose. We hope that this ill-fated negotiation may have some

positive result, in the form of curing illusions in high quarters. This lesson, assuming that at last it will be learned, should definitely preclude any resumption of appeasement efforts as already suggested in the Congress press. One paper has actually proposed that an assurance by the Viceroy, as given after the breakdown of the negotiations for the Congress accepting office in the provinces, may still have the way to the formation of a National Government.

We also want the Viceroy to make a declaration to the effect that a National Government, vested with the power and responsibility as outlined in the Cripps proposals, is going to be formed immediately. The party leaders having refused to be helpful, the National Government should now be formed with more responsible and realistic independent public men, chosen on their individual merit.

Patriotism is not the monopoly of any particular party. Therefore, a Government composed of independent public men, with a record of service to the cause of the country, will be a National Government in addition to being a strong War Cabinet which, being free of party preoccupation and wire pulling, will with a single minded purpose apply itself to the supreme task of contributing to the joint efforts of defeating the Axis Powers. If there are party leaders willing to put their shoulders to the wheel, they will be welcome, but as individuals. The nature of the "National Government" demanded by the Congress has been very correctly characterised by Sir Stafford Cripps. In his letter to the Congress President, he wrote that it "would in fact constitute an absolute dictatorship of the majority, and subject all of them (minorities) to a permanent and autocratic majority in

the Cabinet." Such a Government evidently would not be a democratic government. Therefore, the demand for the establishment of such an autocratic party regime cannot be put forward as the will of the people.

Thus, the breakdown of the useless and harmful negotiations does not in any way prejudice the plan of handing over to Indians the responsibility and power of defending the country against invasion, and transforming it into a sector of the World War Front against Fascism. Clear the debris of these ridiculous statements and counter-statements, proposals and counter-proposals, formulas and re-formulas, visits and return-visits, so that the people's mind may turn from the war of words, waged in an atmosphere of unreality, to the grim war of rude realities, which is ruthlessly coming nearer and nearer. Let men ready to act according to the need of the moment step forward to occupy posts which they alone can fill up creditably and to the benefit of the common cause of civilised humanity.

The crux of the problem of Indian defense is how to make the popular masses take active and intelligent interest in the war efforts. The decisive factor is not the personnel, but the policy of the Government. Indians living in the seven lakhs of villages and toiling in the towns and cities are not at all concerned with all this political bargaining and communal bickerings. An entirely different kind of appeal has to be made to them, and it is after all their enthusiastic co-operation which is needed for winning the war. At present, the Government has no policy. Its war efforts are planless, and its war propaganda has no appeal for the common man. The machinery of the Government moves as ponderously as in peace time. Even if some men at the top have some

good ideas, they cannot be put into practice because the bureaucratic machinery cannot be adjusted to new ideas. Consequently, measures urgently needed to create the atmosphere, in which war propaganda can be carried on effectively and war efforts can have enthusiastic popular support, are either delayed indefinitely or not taken at all. Large amounts of money are spent on propaganda, but it is not realised that propaganda cannot be carried on in a vacuum. The success of any propaganda is conditional upon its psychological appeal, and the mentality of the masses is very largely determined by the experiences of their daily life.

A policy based upon these elementary considerations regarding the crux of the problem alone can lead to its solution. Such a policy is sure to enlist popular support to war efforts, thereby increasing the defensive and striking power of India. Let there be a Government armed with such a policy, it will be able to function very effectively, disregarding the unhelpful or even obstructive attitude of parties and politicians, who are more concerned with prestige and other petty interests than with the defense of the country.

The fundamental principle of the urgently needed policy should be to subordinate all sectional interests and other considerations to the purpose of enlisting popular support to war efforts. And there must be a centralised direction setting aside the departmentalism of the normal time administration, for the execution of the policy. No government, however composed, even if it included the popular party leaders, will be able to tackle the situation, unless armed with such a policy and determined to put it into practice at all cost.

The vast bulk of the Indian people are not at all concerned with the issues which agitate the mind of the politicians. The so-called politically minded constitute a relatively tiny fraction of the entire population. Nevertheless, they can sway the masses so long as these are dissatisfied owing to other reasons. Remove those reasons, give the masses something, relieve the hardships and privations of their daily life, and the entire atmosphere will become favourable for intensified and successful war efforts.

Industrial labour is a vital factor in the scheme of defense,—perhaps the most vital factor. The process of industrial production must go on uninterrupted, if the armed forces are to be properly equipped and fully supplied. But workers are running away from the threatened industrial areas, and all efforts to check the exodus have until now very largely failed. Nearly half the industrial workers of Calcutta and the neighbourhood have fled. Similarly alarming reports come also from less threatened areas. The exodus of labour cannot be checked unless measures are taken to make the workers feel that it is worthwhile for them to take risks. Far from doing that, even the most moderate demands of labour go unheeded. The result is the spread of dissatisfaction, which causes labour to run away in panic. This unfortunate situation is due to the absence of a centralised labour policy of the Government. The Labour Department of the Government of India cannot operate directly, because of the autonomy of the provincial governments to deal with industrial disputes. On the other hand, production is directly under the Central Government and is administered as an integral part of war efforts. It is evident that the process of production cannot be efficiently

administered without the co operation of labour. Therefore, provincial governments cannot be allowed to have autonomous labour policies or deal with the labour situation in their own way. A central policy and a central control is absolutely necessary. So long that is not there, war production cannot be guaranteed against occasional disturbance, either by industrial disputes or owing to labour running away in panic.

The delay or even refusal to redress the legitimate grievances of labour is still justified by fallacious economic arguments, which might be plausible in peace time, but have lost all force in the present emergency. There should be no lag in the process of production, which must be speeded up to the highest limit. That is the supreme consideration of the moment. No argument is valid which interferes with it. Dissatisfied labour is bound to retard the process of production. Therefore, the grievances of labour should be sympathetically considered, expeditiously redressed, not out of humanitarianism, but as a matter of war time necessity. That is not done firstly because the employers generally seem to be more concerned with amassing private fortunes than with the defense of the country, and secondly, because the Government is unwilling to exercise its authority and emergency powers to make the exigencies of defense prevail upon sectional selfishness. Then, there is bureaucratic red tape, which also contributes to the complete chaos in handling labour.

The cost of living has gone up but wages are not increased. As a matter of fact, real wages are falling. Yet no definite policy has been adopted regarding the general demand for an adequate dearness allowance. Moreover, there is a clear case for a sufficient increase of wages,

and payment of a war bonus, as well as for over-time work are indispensable for increasing production. There is absolutely no valid economic argument in favour of the employers who would not contribute their quota to the common war effort. They are piling profits. If they would not voluntarily forego a part of it for the sake of creating an atmosphere necessary for the defense of the country, it is the clear duty of the Government to compel them to do so. Unless that was done, no amount of propaganda could persuade labour to take risks and participate in the war efforts enthusiastically, which is essential for maintaining the level of, and increasing production.

A similar policy is urgently needed as regards the peasant masses as well as the lower strata of the urban middle-class, which are subjected to all sorts of privations thanks to war profiteering. The policy of controlling prices is practically invalidated by the slowness of the administrative machinery and many other more reprehensible causes. As a matter of fact, profiteering in food-stuffs and other articles of primary necessity is running rampant. In the absence of a Government policy, no effective control is possible.

The fundamental principle of the urgently needed policy in respect of all these particular aspects of public life as well as the whole problem of defense should be that property must be sacrificed if necessary, for the defense of liberty. Any Government, which will have the courage and foresight to adopt such a policy, will be a truly national as well as democratic government, and only such a government can undertake the difficult task of enlisting enthusiastic support of the people for the war efforts. Therefore, it was useless to spend all this

time in negotiations for persuading the party leaders to form a Government. The first thing to do is to define the task of the moment and to realise what must be done in order to accomplish that task. Who ever is prepared to shoulder the task, setting aside all other considerations and are able to realise what is to be done for its accomplishment, are the men of the hour. The intransigence and irresponsibility of the party leaders are no reason why others should not be vested with the power and authority with which they can apply themselves to the task of the moment.

The breakdown of the negotiations over the Cripps proposals should now clear the political atmosphere, so that those who realise the supreme importance of the task of the moment may now have the opportunity of shouldering the responsibility which they alone can discharge.

April 19, 1942

## VI

On the eve of Sir Stafford Cripps' visit, we wrote that the immediate result of his visit would be volleys of statements and counter-statements, which could only confuse the popular mind and further complicate the situation. Exactly that has happened, and nothing more positive. But the failure of the Cripps mission may yet mean success for a greater mission—that of transforming India into an impregnable sector of the World War Front against Fascism. For this mission, no help could be expected from the Congress leaders, who have all along been pulling in the contrary direction.

Now the question is: what next? Will there follow a period of inaction, enlivened only by hoping against hope? Will the failure of the Cripps mission mean a return to the status quo? Will the authorities in this country as well as in Britain commit the mistake of not seeing the forest for the trees? Or will those who are eager to get down to serious work at last have the field free?

While the political bargainers are engaged in the useless and indecent pastime of apportioning blame, these more practical questions must be worrying those who are earnestly concerned with the difficult problem of making the Indian masses actively interested in the defense of the country.

The abortive Delhi talks have already done incalculable harm. Just when, under the pressure of unexpected events, the Government was trying to shake off its pre-

vious complacency, there intervened a period of uncertainty, which only paralysed urgently needed action. There was going to be a clean sweep, with Sir Stafford's broom. He talked of one Government taking over from another. Consequently, an atmosphere of patching up could not be altogether absent. And in such an atmosphere, there could be no initiative, much less any long term plan of action. Matters drifted, just when they had to be taken firmly in hand, and given a definite and determined turn.

Such an interlude of uncertainty, marking time, and forced inaction, must be regarded as a mishap. Let it end, so that those eager to act may heave a sigh of relief in an atmosphere no longer vitiated with meaningless statements and counter statements, secret interviews and wild rumours. The plan of passing on to Indians the responsibility for organising resistance to invasion should be executed immediately. The bargaining politicians having eliminated themselves, there remains no obstacle on the way to the immediate formation of a strong War Cabinet, composed of popular public men chosen on their merit. There is no dearth of such men. They must be enabled to give India a new leadership in these fateful days.

We have always maintained that the solution of the problem of enlisting popular support for the war efforts of India is not necessarily conditional upon the co-operation of the leaders of the major nationalist and communist organisations. If that co-operation was available, the task would be easier. Since it is not, another approach to the problem has to be found. It would be dangerous to waste time, hoping against hope to relapse into old time complacency. It would be even more dangerous.

Both the dangers could be avoided by realising that the basic fact of the situation is that the vast bulk of the Indian people—the almost inexhaustible, but practically untapped reserve of national energy—is not politically minded. In other words, India should not be identified with the nationalist and communalist organisations, which are composed of vocal minorities, and dominate the situation by their ability to make noise.

It is quite possible to go straight to the masses and mobilise them for the defense of the country. Nearly ninety per cent of the people live in the villages. They cannot run away in panic like the urban population. Therefore, it will not be difficult to inspire them with the courage and determination to defend their hearth and home, provided that measures are taken which will make them feel that they have something to defend. Tell the peasants that the land they till belongs to them, give them the freedom and facility to defend it, and there will be seven lakhs of points of resistance scattered all over the country. The line of defense will be as thick as the whole country.

Our contention that the so-called politically minded, who after all constitute only a tiny fraction of the vast population, are to be ruled out of the scheme of Indian defense, has at last been corroborated by no less an authority than the Mahatma. In a recent issue of the 'Harijan' he wrote :

"The Japanese declare that they have no designs on India. Their quarrel is only with the British. There must be a fairly large number who believe in the declarations of the Japanese, and think that they will deliver the country from the British yoke, and retire. Even if the worst happens, their fatigue of the British yoke is so

great that they would even welcome the Japanese yoke for a change'

Then the Mahatma proceeds to mention "the neutral, who will help neither the British nor the Japanese". Finally, there are the "non-violent resisters", who, the Mahatma admits, are few. And their modus operandi, as prescribed by the Generalissimo, would preclude even non violent resistance at the critical moment. The Mahatma writes

'One thing has to be made clear. Where the British army is actually engaging the enemy, it will be perhaps improper for direct resistance to function. It will not be non violent resistance, when it is mixed with, or allies itself to, violence'

These three categories together compose practically the entire following of the major political parties. It is evident from the Mahatma's description that they are to be written off as a liability in any scheme of defense. Some individual Congress leaders, who speak a different language, will not be able to control their nominal followers. Otherwise, the negotiations on the Cripps proposals would not have broken down.

But there still remain the "dumb millions, who do not perhaps know that there is such a thing as deliverance". They constitute the reserve force of Indian defense, they represent the vast reservoir of energy, which must be mobilised and properly canalised if India is to be defended.

The co-operation of the party leaders is not essential for making the dumb millions articulate and active. Nor can the politically minded minority be helpful. They have been misinforming and misleading the masses during these two years and a half. Therefore, the

elimination of their evil influence is a condition for a successful mass mobilisation for the defense of the country.

Drastic measures and bold action are the need of the moment. Stop the mischievous and misleading chatter of the monopolist minority, and let the dumb millions know that there is such a thing as their deliverance. Then there will be an entirely new atmosphere: courage will replace defeatism, hope will dispel despair, and a resurgent people will fight for freedom, brushing aside the politicians who expect it as a gift, either from the British or from the Japs.

The political atmosphere of the country should no longer remain loaded heavily with hopes and expectations. Recently, hopes rose high and expectations were great. India was to be electrified with a strong will to perform great acts of heroism, if only some mystic formula of constitutional make-belief could be found. The frantic movements of the political bazar clouded the real nature of the problem of Indian defense.

Now, there is again a depression in the political atmosphere, and the realities of the situation can be seen raising their ugly heads. These realities were always there; only the anxiety to appease the irreconcilables preferred to ignore them. They would all change overnight, it was hoped, if the party leaders could be placated and propitiated. But the gods proved to be too exacting, and their bargaining spirit exasperated the patient and painstaking peace-makers. Soon it was evident that there was to be no appeasement. There could not be. The British Government's approach to the Indian problem was wrong.

This is not a war of nationalities. It is an international civil war. Otherwise, the current phrases, such

as "death struggle between good and evil", between "progress and reaction", between "non aggression and aggression", so on and so forth, have no meaning. Entire nations cannot be classified as good or bad, progressive or reactionary, peaceful or aggressive. Both the conflicting forces run criss-cross through the life of each nation. Therefore, each nation is split up into two opposing camps. The present war is a war between two international alliances of the two antagonistic forces, which are in operation inside every country.

The disregard for this basic characteristic of the situation vitiated the British Government's approach to the Indian problem. Any attempt to rally India as a whole on the side of the non aggressor Powers was unrealistic and therefore bound to fail. The Axis Powers have their allies in India. It is not an opportunist alliance. It is the concrete expression of spiritual affinity-of an identity of ideas and ideals. The Congress or any other amorphous political organisation, being a cross section of India, is not a homogeneous body. The conflicting forces are in operation also in them. That explains the failure of the Congress to act according to the views which are so frequently expressed by some of its leaders, and which raise false hopes. But the failure should not discourage all efforts to solve the problem of Indian defense. On the contrary, the experience of the failure should indicate the correct approach to the problem.

Even when the stage was being set for the dreary drama of Crippsian diplomacy, it appeared that the Government was moving in the right direction of encouraging popular initiative. While addressing the

last session of the Chamber of Princes, the Viceroy suggested the organisation of what he called the "National War Front". The label chosen was not very appropriate to the realities of the situation, and the Viceroy still expressed the hope that people belonging to all political organisations and communities would unite for opposing the common enemy. The need for differentiating the sheep from the goat was still not realised. Nevertheless, the objects of the proposed popular War Front specified by the Viceroy were very realistic.

The National War Front is to be formed with the following objects: "To maintain public morale; to eradicate all elements tending to undermine it; and in particular to counteract Fifth Column activity of all kinds, including all talk, thought, writings and rumours likely to encourage a defeatist outlook, to inculcate faith, courage and endurance; and to consolidate the national will to offer united resistance to Nazism and Fascism, in every shape and form, whether within or without the country, until their menace is finally overthrown."

The Viceroy trusted "that the National War Front will derive its strength and vitality from the patriotism of private citizens and public spirited leaders." That is the correct approach to the problem of popularising war efforts.

At last, the finger was laid on the sore spot: the crux of the problem of Indian defense was revealed. Fortification of the home front is the most important part in any scheme of effective defense against Axis aggression. Evidently, that cannot be done unless it is realised that the menace to the all-important home front comes from a section of the Indian people. Instead of entertaining the vain hope of uniting divergent forces,

the reality of the situation must be faced, and in order to secure the home front, those menacing it must be isolated or more severely treated

We welcome the call for the formation of the popular war front because we have been all along working with that object. We have been advocating the formation of People's Defence Committees throughout the country as the instrument for the mobilisation of the democratic and progressive forces to reinforce war efforts with voluntary and intelligent co-operation. We set the following tasks to the People's Defence Committees

1 To combat the sympathy for the Fascist Powers and wish for their victory, 2 To expose those whose activities encourage this mental attitude, as enemies of the people, 3 To explain how a successful invasion of India by the Fascist Powers will be a greater evil and prejudice the cause of Indian freedom, 4 To promote the popular will to resist that greater evil, 5 To counteract panic and confusion by awakening self confidence in the masses

All the democratic and progressive forces in the national life of India should be prepared to work for the above objects. Otherwise the defense of India is not possible whether the power and responsibility remain where they are to day or are transferred to Indian hands. The Viceroy himself having specified identical objects, it goes without saying that all the facilities and the fullest freedom will be available to those working for them. And for the freedom loving fighters against Fascism, those objects should be more electrifying than any formula about constitutional technicalities. It is time for them to give India a new leadership.

April 26, 1942

## VII

The Cripps mission has ended exactly as we apprehended. Instead of improving the situation in any way, appeasement diplomacy has caused a considerable deterioration. The resolution of the A. I. C. C. meeting at Allahabad declares that in consequence of the Cripps negotiations "the spirit of non-co-operation with Britain has grown". Having declared that, the A.I.C.C. resolution lays down a policy which has been correctly characterised by Mr. Rajagopalachari as "neutrality", and which in practice may amount to worse. Thus, the delay caused by appeasement diplomacy has been dangerous. The Congress attitude is naturally pleasing the Axis Powers, and encouraging the Japs to invade India with the confidence that there will be no popular resistance. Such an attitude is positively prejudicial for the defense of the country.

The negative result of the ill-conceived and ill-fated Cripps mission, however, is not an unmixed evil. It has cleared the political atmosphere. Illusions have been dispelled, and the clay-feast of gods have been exposed. The rude realities of the Indian situation to-day stand out in the clearest relief. Unfortunately, those in power would still play the ostrich game not only at their risk but risking the future of the Indian people. Therefore, plain speaking is urgently needed.

The Congress leaders have laid their cards on the table. That is the positive result of the Cripps mission. There is no room for hopes and speculation. Misinformed and misguided friends of India may no longer

talk lyrically about the anti-Fascist and democratic ideals of the Congress. We all along knew what cards the Congress leaders held and how they wished to play them. Now it is no longer necessary for us to point out the implication of the policy which the Congress has pursued ever since the war broke out. The A I C C resolution is a clear statement of it. There is little ambiguity. It nullifies all the fulminant pronouncements of Pandit Nebru which have been misleading world opinion and raising false hopes.

The following is the most significant passage of the resolution 'India's participation in the war was a purely British act imposed upon the Indian people without the consent of their representatives. While India has no quarrel with the people of any country, she has repeatedly declared her antipathy to Nazism and Fascism as to Imperialism. If India were free, she would have determined her own policy, and might have kept out of the war.'

The Congress leaders are not of the opinion that India should join the world struggle against the Axis Powers as a matter of principle. If they were at the helm of affairs, India might not be involved in the war, or even might have been in the other camp. Otherwise this insistence on the right of deciding has no point. This attitude, unworthy for whoever pretends to be fighting for freedom and democracy, is justified with the banal declaration that India has no quarrel with the people of any country. That is all beside the point. None of the countries engaged in the war against the Fascist Powers has any such quarrel. It is not a matter of quarrel at all. It is a conflict of ideas and ideals. The war is not against Germany, Italy or Japan. It has

been precipitated by a socio-political system which, having overwhelmed the forces of freedom and progress in those countries, and having seized others in its bloody tentacles, threatens to overrun the rest of the world. To maintain that the freedom or general welfare of any particular nation could be promoted or protected by neutrality in this world struggle, is simply absurd. It is worse ; because, for all practical purposes, it amounts to saying that the destruction of Fascism is not a condition for the freedom and progress of the whole world. Or that, in a world dominated by the Axis Powers, particular countries can be nationally free.

That is the opinion of all orthodox full-blooded nationalists who identify nationalism with the aspirations of certain sections of the people. They do not believe in democracy, and do not favour any progress except in the retrograde direction. As a matter of fact, Fascism is the expression of antiquated Nationalism, and Nationalism historically has become an antiquated cult. Therefore, Fascist sympathy has been an outstanding feature of Indian Nationalism all along.

The average Indian nationalist worships at the shrine of supermen like Hitler and Mussolini. Ashamed of the sense of his weakness, he pines for a strong man to appear on the scene to take Mother India by the throat and treat her children like dumb-driven cattle. National freedom may be anything but democratic freedom. It should be freedom to sacrifice for the greatness of the nation, and power for the strong man to make the nation great at the cost of the people. Those are typically Fascist ideas. Therefore, nationalist India could never be in the anti-Fascist camp.

For these two and a half years we have been trying to drive this point home. It was not an easy task. It was swimming against a powerful current of prejudice at home and ignorance abroad. But history is a stern teacher, and the logic of events is irresistibly convincing. If language is meant to express ideas, then the A. I. C. C. resolution vindicates us, and none should have any doubt about what is to be done to transform India into an active asset to the world struggle against Fascism.

The method of non violent non co operation, reaffirmed as the only form of resistance to the invader, will be capitulation for all practical purposes. Such method may be to an extent effective against a civil government. But how is it to be practised against an invading army? Particularly when scorched earth policy is ruled out? Indeed, the master strategist of non violent warfare has already disapproved of measures which would have to be adopted if the method was to be practised at all. In the current issue of the 'Harijan', the Mahatma condemns measures being taken in Bengal with the object of depriving the invader of the advantage of the certain easily available means of transport, such as country boats, bicycles etc. Evidently, the "resistance" through non violent non co-operation would not include even such measures as to deprive the invader of easily available facilities. Everything will be there for him to seize and use for his purpose. That means that there will be absolutely no resistance.

The actual wording of the resolution is remarkable. "We may not bend the knee to the aggressor, nor obey any of his orders. We may not look to him for favours or fall to his bribes." So, whatever resistance is visualised will be entirely discretionary. One may or may not. If

this is not a thinly veiled advice to capitulate, then words have no meaning. Then again: "In places wherein the British and the invading forces are fighting, our non-co-operation will be fruitless and unnecessary." The meaning of this passage is positively mischievous. Wherever there will be any active resistance to the invader, even "non-violent non-co-operation" should not be practised. That is to say, the invaders should not be embarrassed.

Moreover, the whole resolution is dishonest. On the face of it, the only justification is practice of non-violence. But it is not at all the issue involved. In another place, the resolution complains against inviting foreign armies to defend India, and declares: "The vast man power of India herself is not utilised for the purpose. It is significant and extraordinary that India's inexhaustible man power should remain untapped". Evidently, the guiding principle of the resolution is not pacifism. It is refusal to defend the country until and unless the Congress leaders have the power to decide whether India should take part in the war against the Axis Powers or not. And given their neutrality or indifference as regards the issues involved in the war, they would be more likely to make peace with the invader than resist, if they had the power to decide.

If this is kept in mind, the sinister significance of the following pivotal passage of the resolution becomes crystal clear: "The present crisis makes it impossible for the Congress to consider any scheme or proposals which retain, even in partial measure, British control and authority in India". Suppose that the demand of the Congress leaders was conceded; what would then happen? If we are to believe that the Congress policy is determined by the principle of non-violence, the only

resistance even then will be non violent non co operation, that is to say, capitulation, for all practical purposes. Or, after a token resistance by an improvised army, peace will be concluded with the invader. In view of the expressed desire to prefer India's staying out of the war, this inference is irresistible.

Seconding the resolution, Babu Rajendra Prasad made that very clear. Referring to the fact that Russia is still not at war with Japan, he said "Russia has taken this course in accordance with her own interests; why can we not do the same?" There cannot be any doubt about the purpose for which the Congress leaders want the complete disappearance of all power and authority except theirs.

The peroration of the mover of the resolution was even more meaningful "Our freedom is coming. It is a matter of a few months. Let us not be found wanting at this moment." When such a declaration is made simultaneously with the resolution not to resist invasion, which is coming first, it is quite legitimate to wonder what is the freedom heralded so confidently. It would not be at all far fetched to infer from this significant declaration that the heralded freedom is expected to come in the wake of the imminent invasion. And only that expectation could possibly allow the policy which the Congress has all along pursued and which the A. I. C. C. has reaffirmed on this very eve of the Japanese invasion.

Members of the Forward Bloc parade the streets of Bengal towns and villages with the slogan "Let us go forward to hail the rising sun of freedom." The slogan found its echo in the A. I. C. C. meeting, and it

was voiced by the mover of the Working Committee resolution.

Nationalism has vindicated Subbas Bose. To-day he is the hero of Indian Nationalism. Those who hounded him out of the Congress are to-day toeing his line, and he has entered into an alliance with the Axis Powers. That explains why, in spite of Pandit Nehru's fulminations, and "fascination for the idea of guerilla warfare", the A. I. C. C. placed all the cards on table, and adopted a resolution to the effect that there could be no resistance to the imminent invasion, and that the Congress leaders should have power only to keep India out of the war.

May 10, 1942

## VIII

During the last couple of hundred years, the idea of democracy has been a powerful ferment of political thought, and has motivated political action. Since the closing decades of the eighteenth century, American and European countries established political regimes which were believed to be democratic. Nevertheless, the concept of democracy remained a matter of controversy.

Though still challenged by an influential body of opinion, the idea gained an increasing support, and democratic government came to be the highest political aspiration. But before long, difficulties were experienced in the functioning of the system. There developed differences about the structure of a democratic government, as well as about the vehicle for the expression and assertion of the people's will. Those differences stimulated political thought, which, in its turn, not only put a new content in the concept of democracy, but visualised a more effective democratic practice.

On the other hand, there was a reaction. Early democrats became conservatives and sounded the alarm against the concept of democracy challenging all authority. Democratic governments became the bulwark of a new conservatism. Even ardent worshippers of democracy were scandalised by the inclination of the fair goddess to transcend the bounds of decency. Obviously, there was something amiss with the idea of democracy. It had not been rigidly thought out.

The reaction against the inglorious development of the theory and practice of democracy eventually culminated

in Fascism. It could grow so powerful thanks to the flaws in the theory and defects in the practice of democracy. The fallacies in the theory of democracy resulted from the abstract nature of the ideal which was conceived rather as a moral principle than a political proposition. The defects of democratic practice were due to its formalism.

The nineteenth century democracy conferred on the people political rights, but not political power. Power was wielded by those who ran the State machinery. They were responsible to the people formally,—only in name. But the people had no power to control them in practice. Thus, being irresponsible for all practical purposes, they acted as they liked, and democracy came to be discredited by their sins of omission and commission. Democratic practice is not inefficient ; democracy did not fail. It has not the chance to assert itself.

The reaction, on the other hand, to the inadequacy of the formalist democratic practice and, on the other hand, to the abuse of the idea of democracy, led up to the demand for dictatorship. But in reality, what was advocated by the critics of formal democracy, was not dictatorship at all. They demanded a genuinely democratic practice, which presupposed actual power, as against nominal rights, in possession of the majority. Nevertheless, frequent use of the repulsive term dictatorship prejudiced their case. It defeated their own end by playing into the hands of democratic conservatism which opposed improvement of the practice of democracy by raising the bogey of chaos and destruction of democracy itself.

The indiscriminate use of the term dictatorship by the vanguard of the forces of democracy has done incalculable harm to the cause of democracy. Among other

things, it helped the reaction against democracy to gather strength with the aid and connivance of democratic governments. Fascism appeared on the scene as the avowed enemy of democracy. Nevertheless, its eventual triumph was very largely due to the fact that formally democratic states aided and abetted it in every possible manner. The danger was not nipped in the bud because it could be utilised for combating democracy trying to assert itself. That was possible for governments which called themselves democratic, because the striving to make democracy triumph could be condemned on the testimony of the vanguard of the forces of democracy, as a conspiracy against democracy—to destroy it by establishing a dictatorship. The charge was unfounded but it appeared to be proved ~~to be true~~.

Parliamentary government, undoubtedly better than the older form of governments it replaced, at the same time, made an empty formality of democratic practice. Nevertheless, it came to be the synonym for democracy. Within its circumscribed limits, there took place political, economic and cultural improvements which were not negligible. Consequently, with all its defects and inadequacies, parliamentary democracy became a tradition which could be trifled with only at the risk of alienating popular sympathy. In countries, where the tradition was well established, advocacy of dictatorship, no matter of what kind was enough to prove the charge of conspiring against democracy.

This brief review of the contemporary and recent history shows that there is a good deal of vagueness about the ideal of democracy, so much so that it could serve the purpose of demagogic deception. On the other

hand, its potentialities have not even been nearly appreciated by its prophets. Therefore, it needs a restatement, rather a revaluation. That is all the more necessary because the ideal of democracy is again motivating political action on the part of all those who are to-day engaged in the war against the Axis Powers.

Contrary to the conventional notion, war has always been a political event. The present war is more pronouncedly so, because it was precipitated by the aggressiveness of Fascism, which originated in the reaction to democratic ideas and democratic practice. It is a war for the defense of democracy. The Fascists say that democracy is political debauchery. Parliamentary democracy has also been characterised as the instrument of the veiled dictatorship of the small class of people who control the economic life of a country through their ownership of the means of production—land and capital. If these charges against it cannot be disproved, then democracy would not be worth fighting for. Unfortunately, democracy, as it has been conceived and practised until now, is open to these charges. But parliamentarism does not exhaust all the potentialities of democracy. Therefore, democracy will survive the present crisis by virtue of its own dynamics. It must outgrow the static conception which, on the one hand, sanctified by metaphysical morality, became a negation of democracy, and, on the other hand, blinded well-meaning enthusiasts about its endless potentialities.

A critique of the conventional democratic practice is relevant to the futile efforts for ending the present constitutional deadlock in India. Only the conventional approach makes the problem as baffling as it appears to be. The deadlock persists simply because of the

persistence to ride a dead horse. It is assumed that practice of democracy in India must be prescribed according to a constitution which is as dead as dodo. Whatever is not technically permissible under the Government of India Act 1935, is forthwith dismissed as repugnant to democracy.

Curiously enough, it is forgotten that one part of the act never came into force, and the other part was suspended except in two provinces. The ill conceived and, therefore, ill fated constitution has thus been scrapped by practice. But its ghost haunts the political life of this country. Conventionally, suspension of a constitution is repugnant to democratic practice, although it may be justifiable as an emergency measure. But it is the height of absurdity to maintain that, for the sake of democratic practice, the constitution should remain suspended. Either the constitution is there, or not. If it is there, let it function, somehow or other. If it is suspended then don't swear by it. Let democracy assert itself unconventionally instead of stifling it conventionally. The choice is between convention and democracy. And the convention is to ride a dead horse. No wonder that the problem of the Indian deadlock yields no solution to the conventional approach. A dead horse cannot take you anywhere. The Government of India Act has lapsed in practice. Let democratic practice in India be prescribed by the realities of the situation and a dynamic conception of democracy.

Moreover, why should the Government of India Act be the guide to democratic practice? It was hardly a democratic constitution. It enfranchised only a fraction of the Indian people. If it functioned, Indian democracy might not have found an opportunity to assert

itself, for a long time. The enfranchised minority might have constituted itself into a privileged class, and become a bulwark of conservatism. Therefore, the present deadlock may be a blessing in disguise—for the Indian democracy. It must be ended in order that the war efforts of India could be intensified with enthusiastic and voluntary popular support. But that cannot be done without discarding conventional democratic practice. Therefore, other channels should be opened for Indian democracy to assert itself. The war is going to release the dynamics of Indian democracy. To prevent or even to delay that process, on any pretext, however plausible, will be obstructing India becoming an active factor in the war.

The experiment of a partial parliamentarism having failed in India, an alternative approach to the problem of establishing a democratic regime must be found. That itself may be an experiment ; but there will not be much danger of going astray, if it will be guided by the concern, rather for the essence than for the formalities of democracy.

The rule of the people is not an end in itself. It is believed that, if a country is ruled by the people, popular welfare becomes the primary concern of the government. The promotion of popular welfare, then, is the essence of democracy. It is not a mere platitude. It can be defined in concrete terms, which will necessarily vary from time to time, and under different circumstances. Those striving to promote concretely defined popular welfare are representatives of the people. They may or may not be elected formally. A government composed of such men is a democratic government. On the other hand, it is a matter of experience that a government composed of

formally elected representatives do not necessarily promote popular welfare. Yet they can win elections, because of the advantages of being in office.

In the world situation of to-day, there is a common criterion of popular welfare. It is the defeat of Fascism. That holds good equally for India. Therefore, it is easy enough to identify the real champions of Indian democracy. They may not be successful demagogues. But they alone can be trusted to help Indian democracy assert itself to make the will of the people articulate.

It is not necessary to set up a government which will not be formally responsible to anybody. An election will be eventually held. In the meantime, the government will have translated its professions into practice. The people will then have to judge, not on promise, but accomplished facts. It is easier to exercise discretion under such circumstances. There is less chance of the people being deceived by demagogy or lured by promises. Certainly, that will be a more democratic practice. The people remains the final authority. Only, they will be called upon to give a verdict when there will be some accomplished facts to judge.

Apart from the valuable contribution to the experiment of a new democratic practice this procedure will immediately end the present deadlock in India. Except for the ghost of a dead and not very democratic constitution, nothing stands on the way to the establishment of a democratic government in this country. The advantages it will offer being so very obvious, it is difficult to understand why there is so much reluctance to move in that direction. Perhaps the static concept of democracy and the tradition of conventional democratic practice still persist. But in order to survive the present crisis,

democracy must outgrow the inadequacies of past practice. The war has presented Indian democracy with an unexpected opportunity. Let it avail of that opportunity, and thus acquire the strength to make a substantial contribution to the victory of world democracy.

May 24, 1942

## IX

At the outbreak of the war, the Congress Working Committee demanded the establishment of a National Government as the condition for Indian co-operation. Since then, a veritable fetish has been made of this idea of a National Government, not only in this country, but even by the friends of India in Britain and America who, being generally of leftist persuasion, should be more discriminating while bestowing their sympathy and support.

Previously, a National Government was demanded as a matter of principle. India herself should be free before she could be expected to help others defend their freedom. Imperialism should liquidate itself, if its proclaimed aim in waging this war was to be believed by the Indians.

Of late, the demand has come to be linked up with the emergency of defending India against threatened invasion. It is maintained that only a National Government can arouse popular enthusiasm for resisting the invader.

Evidently, there is a confusion of thought. Nationalism is confounded with democracy. For defending herself against an invasion, India needs a democratic government. A National Government will not necessarily be a democratic government. There was a time when the demand for national freedom had a democratic sanction. To day, nationalist isolation runs counter to democracy, which can be defended internationally, by

an international effort. The success of this effort presupposes inter-dependence. A really democratic government can no longer be nationalistic; conversely, a National Government can not be instrumental for mobilising the popular energy of any particular country on the side of the international democratic front.

The original demand for a National Government was backed up by the apparently democratic contention that the Indian people should have the freedom to join the war or not. The main justification for the policy of non-co-operation was the complaint that India had been involved in others' quarrels without her consent. The war was condemned as an imperialist war, precipitated rather by Britain's anxiety to check the resurrection of a powerful Germany, than by Fascist aggressiveness, which did not concern India, except that, if Britain won, Indian bondage would be strengthened. The logical conclusion of that line of argument was obvious: India should do nothing to help Britain win the war, which by implication, if not explicitly, meant that a victory of the Fascist Powers was rather to be desired than dreaded by India. Thus, nationalism would land India in the anti-democratic camp.

As a matter of fact, originally, Indian nationalism did declare its neutrality in this war. It was further declared by authoritative Congress leaders that, if India was given the freedom to choose, she would prefer to be neutral. So, the consequence of the establishment of a National Government, in the beginning of the war, would have meant India's isolation from the world democratic front. Even the self-liquidation of British Imperialism would not necessarily mean victory of Indian democracy. Autarchy is the economics of antiquated nationalism; and

autarchy blasts the very foundation of democracy. It is not a mere accident that anarchist principles underly the so called constructive programme of the major nationalist organisation of India.

Those are not arguments against Indian freedom. The point is that triumph of nationalism would not necessarily be freedom for the Indian people, nor would India become a bastion of democracy in consequence of the establishment of a National Government. The decisive argument in support of this contention is provided by the remarkable fact that the demand has never been for a democratic government. It is for Indianisation. One has to assume that every Indian is a born democrat, in order simply to believe that a National Government would automatically be a democratic government. It is absurd to assume that any Indian is better than any Englishman.

If the demand is for a democratic government, in the place of the present regime, why not say so? The label 'Nationalist' can be affixed to all and sundry. The demand for a democratic government must be associated with a programme, and the picture of democratic freedom is by now quite familiar. It makes no room for mystification. It would displease even frighten, the pillars of nationalism which can harbour and justify all manner of reactionary, authoritarian and dictatorial ambitions. Hence the deliberate preference for the term 'National Government', which need have no popular programme, and yet can catch popular imagination by exploiting racial prejudice. And the very preference proves that the National Government is not going to be a democratic government. When nationalism degenerates into racism, it cuts itself adrift from democratic ideas.

The undemocratic, indeed anti-democratic, implication of the demand for a National Government is not essentially affected by its now being linked up with the emergency of defending the country against invasion. That is evident from the Allahabad resolution of the All-India Congress Committee. It is known that the resolution was inspired from Wardha, but it was somewhat gilded by the cheap alloy manufactured in Ananda Bhawan. The Mahatma has since torn down the thin veil. In his opinion, no government could be national unless it had the right to make peace as well as war. Generally, that is an unchallengeable proposition. But in the context of the present international relations, it has an alarming connotation, and all propositions to-day must be judged only in that context.

However, let us assume that the right to make peace with the invaders is demanded only in theory; that it won't be practised. Even then the position does not improve. The National Government may not make peace; nor would it wage war against the invader. It would only non-co-operate non-violently. That resolution may absolve it of the moral guilt of surrendering to the invader, but would certainly not have any practical value for the defense of the country.

Just imagine the position. The National Government would have the control of the armed forces. These would not be allowed to function. Most probably, they would be disarmed and disbanded. Would not the country thus be made an easy prey for the invader? Whatever might be the hypothetical power of non-violent or passive resistance, for the present it would certainly not be able to prevent the invaders conquering the country. The National Government would be overthrown,

unless it was prepared to come to terms with the invaders

The misfortune would not be for India alone. If, thanks to the establishment of a National Government the Japs succeeded in capturing India, the cause of world democracy would be severely prejudiced. That unfortunate event might turn the tide of the whole war. Thus, a hypothetical triumph of Indian Nationalism would most probably contribute to the victory of the Axis Powers. A democratic government in India would certainly be opposed to any such calamity possibly happening and therefore be free from the influence of isolationist and racial nationalism.

Now let us argue on yet another supposition—the National Government would not pursue the suicidal policy recommended by the Mahatma.

Firstly, the danger of its coming to terms with the invader instead of resisting would still remain. To anticipate that danger, it is not necessary to assume any bad faith or deliberate plan. It might result logically from Nationalism. Petain might have honestly believed that his policy would spare France heavier defeat and greater humiliation. Similarly, the National Government might think that it would be preferable for India to avoid a war, and come to terms with Japan. Indian capitalists and landlords as a rule would certainly favour such a policy in order to avoid loss of property which would be unavoidably caused by war. Under the given situation the terms would be dictated by the invader, who would exact his pound of flesh and more. The invader, would also welcome the possibility of avoiding a costly war, and yet gain his object. He would therefore, be prepared to reward those creating that possibility.

The burden would be quietly passed on to the Indian-democracy who would pay the piper for playing a tune called by the National Government. A situation would be created in which the National Government would have to introduce all sorts of repressive measures for suppressing the democracy rebelling against greater exploitation and loss of freedom.

Secondly, there is no reason to believe that the people would be electrified with the enthusiasm to make sacrifices for defending the country as soon as a National Government was established. That would all depend on the policy of the Government. It is not the personnel but the policy that would count. And the only policy which would enable any government to enlist popular support must be guided by the simple principle that property should be subordinated to the cause of liberty. In other words, it must be a truly democratic policy—the policy of guaranteeing the greatest good to the greatest number.

Which sort of a government is more likely to adopt such a policy? Evidently, a government which must perish if the war was not won. In so far as there is a possibility of an Indian National Government coming to terms with Japan or any other Axis Power at the cost of Indian democracy, but to the gratification of sentimental nationalism, the establishment of a National Government cannot be the guarantee for the defense of India. And the danger of a non-descript Indian National Government coming to terms with the invader in order to avoid war, if not for any other purpose, results from the fact that the economic pillars of nationalism would not sacrifice property for liberty. They have made that clear, and the Congress has backed them up.

## X

India needs a Democratic Government. The cry for a National Government, raised not only in this country, but also by the misinformed friends of India in Britain, does not represent the realisation of this need, which is all the more pressing when defense against invasion is the paramount task of the moment. A Democratic Government such as would promote the welfare of India by organising her defense, not as an isolated country, but as a sector of the international People's War Front, could not be formed on the basis of the tradition of orthodox Nationalism.

That was clear to all critical observers from the very beginning of this crisis precipitated by nationalist prejudice, and the contradictions of antiquated Nationalism. Therefore, as soon<sup>i</sup> as the National Congress adopted a negative attitude towards the world conflict, whose outcome was bound to affect the future of India, we called for a radical realignment of forces in the public life of the country, as the condition for the solution of the problems confronting it. Although there was an encouraging response to the call, the implications of the situation, created by nationalist prejudice and the traditions of the nationalist movement, were not fully realised. It was hoped that eventually good sense would prevail. With that groundless hope, the situation was allowed to drift. The result of that complacency has been greater complication of the problem of democratising the Government of the country. And the danger resulting

from the delay in the solution of the problem has aggravated

The complacency on the part of those holding the reins of power was ultimately disturbed when the war approached actually the frontiers of India. Previously, it was not believed that India would ever be directly involved in the war. Therefore, the internal situation did not cause any great anxiety. Even the need for military preparedness, on anything like an appreciable scale, was not felt. The unexpected hostile move on the part of Japan and the staggering events on the Pacific war front came as rude shocks, which jolted the rulers of India out of their complacency.

The country was directly threatened. The armed forces were not adequate to meet the emergency. Rapid preparations for the defense of the country against the imminent invasion called for supreme efforts, which could not be successful without a willing and enthusiastic co-operation of the people. But there was a widening gulf between the Government and the people. How to bridge the gulf, and quickly? The administration of the affairs of the country should be passed on to men who commanded popular confidence. In other words, the government of the country should be democratized.

A bold step was taken with that purpose. It was a bold step, but a step in the wrong direction. The object of the Cripps Mission was to democratise the government of India on the basis of a compromise with Nationalism. Therefore, it was bound to fail. A National Government, such as would satisfy those whom the Cripps Mission was to placate, would be the dictatorship of one party, whose totalitarian claim to represent the whole of India is disputed by a majority of the people inhabiting

this country. The missionary zeal of Sir Stafford Cripps was slabberghasted by this discovery made at the eleventh hour.

The offer of the British Government, with which Sir Stafford Cripps came, itself made a compromise with Nationalism impossible. The offer was to grant India the right of self-determination. The interim arrangement proposed was a minor part of the far-reaching offer, which essentially meant nothing short of liquidation of Imperialism.

The prerogative of the British Parliament to guide the process of India's political evolution is the constitutional foundation of the British domination of India. The Cripps offer was a negation of that prerogative. India's right to frame her own Constitution was to be formally admitted. That would be recognition of the sovereignty of the Indian people. Upon that recognition, Imperialism would be a thing of the past.

Evidently, there was the acceptance of the demand made by the Congress at the outbreak of the war as the condition for India's participation in it. Why, then, did the Congress leaders reject the Cripps offer ? Because of the contradiction between Democracy and Nationalism. The perspective opened up by the offer was replacement of Imperialism by Democracy. But the demand of Nationalism as it crystallised during the Cripps negotiations, is replacement of Imperialism by a party dictatorship. Thus, Nationalism exposed itself as no less antagonistic to democratic freedom than Imperialism. Indeed, while under the pressure of circumstances the latter is moving towards compulsory self-liquidation, Nationalism wishes to fortify itself with dictatorial State power.

The assertion of Indian democracy, necessary for India's defense for herself, and for the security of the international People's War Front, is obstructed by both, now more by Nationalism than by Imperialism

The undue emphasis on the disagreement about the less important part of the offer relating to the interim arrangement, has confused the real issue, which is the limit of the application of the right of self determination. In the last analysis, the negotiations finally broke down owing to disagreement on that fundamental issue. That was clear from the Delhi resolution of the Congress Working Committee, which rejected the Cripps offer. Any possible doubt was subsequently dispelled by the A I C C rejecting the Rajagopalachari resolution, and passing a counter resolution emphatically denying the democratic right of self determination to racial, linguistic and religious groups composing the population of India.

Authoritarian Nationalism may be scandalised by Mr Jinnah's Two-Nation Theory. But it is valid from the nationalist as well as the democratic point of view. However, by definitely committing itself against conceding the right of self determination, without any reservation and limit, the Congress not only takes up a position antagonistic to democratic freedom, but can no longer be regarded as the national organisation representing the whole of India, and as such as indispensable for the formation of a Democratic Government.

Therefore, from every point of view, the establishment of a National Government, such as demanded by the Congress, would not solve the problem of democratising the Government of India.

The same conclusion must be reached even if democracy was vulgarised as simple counting of heads. The

most liberal estimate of the strength of the Congress will be to hold that it represents the whole of Hindu India. In that sense it may be regarded as the majority party ; and it may be maintained that, as such, a government controlled by it will be a democratic government.

But then, the Muslim League cannot be simply left out of account. It is a powerful factor. The only way out is a coalition of the two major organisations. That way has been blocked by the Allahabad resolution of the A.I.C.C. But, suppose that men like Rajagopalachari will be able to persuade the Congress to take up a more accomodating attitude towards the Muslim League. That would not be an unmixed blessing. The great bulk of the Hindus, particularly the so-called politically minded, who dominate nationalist politics, would dissent. Whom would the Congress represent then ? It would be a group of vocal politicians, as it is even to-day, essentially. Would a government formed with their co-operation be democratic, even if the Muslim League came in ? It might be, in so far as the Muslims are concerned. But certainly not for the rest of India.

Is it, then, not obvious that democratisation of the Government of India cannot possibly take place on the basis of a compromise with Nationalism ? The Cripps offer made far-reaching concessions to Indian democracy ; and precisely by doing so it challenged the authoritarian claim of the major nationalist organisation. Therefore, the whole of the offer itself defeated its own end, which was a compromise with Nationalism. Such a compromise is not possible, unless you are prepared to accept its authoritarian claim, and then democracy must be sacrificed on the altar of Nationalism. The failure to have due regard for this obvious implication of the situation has

frustrated all efforts to solve the problem of democratising the Government of India. The efforts have been like moving in a vicious circle.

The two major organisations are irreconcilable,—between themselves. Between them, they have liquidated Nationalism, if that is to be understood as the common urge of a united people for political freedom. What is regarded as national freedom by the Congress is dreaded by the Muslim League as Hindu majority domination. The right of self determination demanded by the Muslim League, on the other hand, is denounced by the Congress as dangerous for the Indian nation. As a matter of fact, both of them are communalist bodies, or both should be regarded as communalist organisations. But they represent two different nations. The two together might claim to represent Indian democracy. But they can never come together. And by taking up the irreconcilably antagonistic positions, either of them can represent the Indian Democracy.

Instead of leading Indian democracy towards freedom, the two major organisations (call them communalist or communalist, as you please) thus become impediments in the way of the Indian democracy asserting itself for gaining its own freedom and helping the world struggle for the defense of the freedom of others. They prevented the Indian people from availing of the right of self determination offered by benighted Imperialism. They are obstructing the process of the liquidation of Imperialism. They are blocking the advance of the Indian people towards democratic freedom.

The urgent need of a realignment of forces in the public life of India is thus obvious. But it cannot take place on the basis of Nationalism, which has become the

greatest obstacle to Indian freedom. In normal circumstances, it might follow a gradual decomposition of the existing political organisations. That would be a long process. In the present emergency, the process must be expedited. There are ways and means for doing that. We have time and again outlined them.

A government composed of men, free from the nationalist prejudices which block progress and aggravate the problem of defense, will be instrumental in expediting the process of a realignment. If the right men are chosen, the government will easily enlist popular support. In order to discharge the responsibility of organising the defense of the country, the Government must necessarily adopt a policy which will win popular confidence. Thus, there is a short cut, so to say, to India having a really Democratic Government. A government composed of men who are determined to win the war, and are convinced that the country cannot be defended without active and enthusiastic co-operation of the masses (not the nationalist parties and politicians), and that that co-operation must be enlisted at all cost, will be a really Democratic Government. Because, to do what it wishes to do, as well as by conviction, the Government will function as a Democratic Government, and thus instrumental in bringing about the realignment of forces necessary for the immediate purpose of defense as well as for the establishment of democratic freedom as against nationalist dictatorship.

June 7, 1942

The suspense following upon the failure of the Cripps Mission has ended. The Viceroy's Executive Council has been further enlarged, with an overwhelming non official Indian majority. The appointment of a Defence Member, in addition to the Commander in Chief, and an Indian receiving it, may be interpreted as indicating that the new Executive Council is meant to function according to the Cripps offer.

That is all very welcome. Now it is for the members of the Council to prove themselves equal to the occasion. If they can realise the gravity of the task given to them, and have the determination and ability to accomplish it, no one can stand on the way. There are constitutional limitations, but there is the war emergency also, which can override everything. The emergency must be met. Who would maintain that technicalities or formal constitutional practice should be allowed to handicap men determined to do everything necessary for winning the war?

It depends upon the men constituting it to make the Executive Council function as a War Cabinet, which is the crying need of the moment. If they fail to do so, then it will be proved that they are not equal to the task. Such a failure will be fatal for the country, and also for the cause of the United Nations. Should that calamity happen, history would pass a severe judgment on those who did not have the courage to choose the right men. It would be idle to quarrel with the Constitution. Constitutions are made by men, according to the needs of

the time. Creators are greater than their creation. We are living in one of those turning periods of history when old ideas lose meaning, old codes become invalid and old institutions operate as handicaps.

The parties and the press which to-day sway vocal public opinion will try to create a chasm between the people and the government with the argument that it is not a National Government. It will again depend upon the Government, particularly its Indian members, whether the mischief-makers will succeed. If they possess the qualities of leadership—imagination, courage, foresight—it will not be difficult for the Indian members of the Executive Council to win popular confidence.

The agitation for a National Government should be confronted with the question : What will make the Government national ? If it is a matter of complexion, Indianisation, then the new Executive Council is very near the mark. Eleven out of the fifteen members are Indians. If eleven Indians, holding constitutionally equal positions, cannot stand up against four Englishmen, that would be a censure on themselves. A government composed only of such men would hardly be a gain for the country. They say that there are others who are more qualified as well as being representative. Let them then come forward to fill up the eleven posts on the Government, and by virtue of their superiority, numerical as well as moral, dominate the situation. Why do they sulk, while it is in their power to give the country a National Government ?

They take up this dog-in-the-manger attitude because they have a different idea about National Government. In their opinion, no Government would be a National Government which had not the power to get out of the

war, irrespective of the desire of Britain and her Allies. Theoretically, the proposition cannot be challenged. But the practice of any theory must be influenced by the circumstances in which it takes place. The outstanding feature of the present circumstances is the threat of an invasion. India can get out of the war only by coming to terms with the invader and, under the given relation of forces, the terms will inevitably be dictated by the latter. Will that be conducive to the welfare of the Indian people which, after all, should be the sole concern of any National Government worth the name?

There are Congressmen and other nationalists who seem to be of the opinion that national sovereignty must be asserted at all cost. In the context of the present circumstances, a dogmatic assertion of national sovereignty would mean getting out of the war on the ground that India has been involved in it without her consent. And getting out of the war, again in the context of the given circumstances, in its turn, would mean coming to terms with the Japanese invaders. Therefore, unless the practice of the theory of national sovereignty is modified according to the exigencies of the given circumstances, it will not promote the cause of national freedom, if national freedom is to be visualised in terms of the welfare of the Indian people. Even if national freedom is conceived metaphysically as "honour and dignity", that also could certainly not be achieved in circumstances which would follow upon India getting out of the war under the given relation of forces, that is to say, under the threat of an invasion.

The defence of the country against the threatened invasion and the greatest possible contribution to the common efforts to defeat the Axis Powers and to destroy

Fascism are the conditions for India's gaining such freedom as would promote the welfare of the masses of her people. Any government ready to undertake those tasks, fully aware of their gravity, and capable of accomplishing them, therefore, would be a National Government. Its personal composition is of secondary importance. The decisive factor is the policy it will pursue, and the policy again is predetermined by the tasks it will have to accomplish. In order to win the war, it must win the people. Its policy must be determined accordingly. Only a democratic practice can assure the government popular support and popular confidence. Any government, in the given situation, unless it would be deliberately defeatist, is bound to be a democratic government, and a democratic government should be any day preferable to a national government which would gamble with the future of the Indian people.

That being the case, none but those having axes to grind should prejudge the new Executive Council. It has all the chances to function as a really National Government. The presence of a few Englishmen is no handicap. Because they certainly will not do anything to deflect the Council from the object of organising the defense of the country and contributing to the victory of the United Nations. And that object must determine the policy of the Government. It must necessarily be a policy of democratic practice—promotion of the welfare of the people to win their support and command their confidence.

Therefore, as against the demand for a National Government, we have all along demanded a War Cabinet. We repeat that demand in connection with the new Executive Council. It must function as a War Cabinet with

the sole object of winning the war and doing everything necessary for the purpose

Our only test is Can the new Executive Council organise the defense of the country? Can it enable India to make the greatest contribution to the defeat of the Axis Powers and in the destruction of Fascism? That cannot be done simply by saying that they want to do it. It is not a question of desire it is a matter of ability. And above all, it is a question of realising what must be done in order to win the war.

We do not know how many members of the new Council will be able to stand the test. But it is more than their reputation which is at stake. It is the future of India, and the cause of human freedom and progress. Therefore, a note of warning should be sounded, and the policy for the Government to adopt be outlined.

The warning is against complacency, which has until now been the greatest of our enemies. Victory will not be achieved simply by affixing the V sign on your cars. There is too much levity and light heartedness. It is believed that the war will be waged by the fighting forces, that they know their business, and others should not worry. The duty of the civil government is believed to be to carry on the routine work, as if there was no war. It is not realised that the people must still be marshalled behind the army. That is the task of the civil government. But that task cannot be accomplished by the methods adopted until now. As a matter of fact, those stupid methods have widened the chasm between the government and the people. The bulk of the people are indifferent to the outcome of the war. They do not co-operate with the war efforts of the government. The number of those who wish enemy victory is legion. Not

a few of them are to be found in the Government Services. While defeatism is widespread, Fifth Column activities are rapidly increasing.

The new Executive Council, thus, is taking office in the midst of a very difficult situation. The difficulty will be aggravated by the military events in the Middle East. The old policy of drift won't do. There must be initiative. It should no longer be left to the demagogues to sway the mind of the masses. The Government must assert its right to lead. But it must win that right by its actions.

Until now, the war has been a good business. It has, indeed, been a racket. While a handful of industrialists and merchants have been making fortunes, the masses of the people are being subjected to growing hardships. The Government has not been quite indifferent to the situation. But its approach to it has been very mechanical and superficial. The prices of commodities have been fixed; but no control is enforced. There is an artificially created scarcity. Those who have money can get everything; only the poor people must suffer. And they are told by the agitators that that is the consequence of the war! Naturally, they feel to hell with this war and hold the present Government responsible for having involved them in it. Disregarding the fact that scarcity is artificially created by war profiteers, the Government has launched the "Grow More Food" campaign which has become a fashion. Why is it necessary to grow more food? War has not increased the population of the country. Nor do the same men eat twice or thrice as much when they join the army. As a matter of fact, there is no scarcity of food; there is no free distribution. The Government should intervene and enforce

rigorously price control measures. Hoarding and cornering should be punished severely. That will immediately relieve the food situation, and the masses will be relieved of much of their hardships.

The war has brought a boom for the industries. But wages have not increased. On the contrary, owing to the artificially created higher prices for food and other necessities, real wages have gone down considerably. Nevertheless, the demand for some relief to the workers in the form of bonus and dearness allowance is not even sympathetically treated. On the pretext of war emergency, workers are compelled to labour under all sorts of galling handicaps, and on the flimsiest excuse they are being thrown out of employment. There is no protection for labour against this arbitrary treatment by the employers, although labour is the most vital factor in war production. Without an enlightened labour policy, the Government, no matter how it is composed, will not be able to increase and expedite production, which is the most important part of war efforts. The central idea of the policy should be to make labour feel that it is worth while to undergo hardships and take risk. That feeling will be created by guaranteeing to labour a considerable share of the profit industries are making from the War boom.

India being an agricultural country, a Government wanting to secure popular support and command popular confidence must redress the burning grievances of the peasantry. Practically all the Indian soldiers are recruited from the peasantry. Therefore, the morale of the armed forces is very largely determined by the mood of the peasantry. It would be foolish optimism to count upon the armed forces keeping the invaders beyond the

frontiers, under all circumstances. Those who are seriously thinking of organising resistance must think in terms of what is known as defense in depth. It may not be possible to prevent the invaders pushing inside the country. The greater chance of defeating them will be there. But then it will no longer be the task of the regular army alone. Active co-operation of the peasant masses will be the decisive factor. Anyone who knows the present mood of the peasant masses cannot expect them to do what the Chinese peasants have been doing for the last four or five years. How could that mood be changed? That cannot be done by propaganda alone. That is the basic problem of Indian defense. Will the new Executive Council have the courage to find the proper approach to it. That will be the acid test.

By now it should be clear to all who are not deluded by foolish optimism that more than the regular army, however reinforced it may be by the Americans, will be necessary to defend India. A veritable people's war will have to be waged. Points of resistance will have to be created in hundreds and thousands of villages, in order to retard the progress of the invaders, and finally to make it impossible for him to remain in the country. That kind of a war cannot be waged by a mercenary army. The entire peasant population must be mobilised, and the only feeling which will inspire them in that grim fight will be that they are fighting to defend what belongs to them. The Government has failed to placate the bargaining politicians. They wanted something which cannot be given, namely, the right to make peace with the invaders. But it should not be impossible to please the peasantry, because the satisfaction of their demand will incalculably increase the country's power of resistance,

and India will be almost overnight converted into an unshakable sector in the World War against Fascism

Assuming that the present Government has been formed with the sole object of winning the war, and every single member of it is actuated by that will, we should expect it to do what must be done in order to attain the object. But we would be failing in our duty if we did not express the misgiving that the gravity of the task does not yet seem to be realised in high quarters, and the readiness for the great sacrifices necessary for the purpose is still absent. Otherwise, there would not be the absence of the courage necessary to reinforce the government with men who are clear about the magnitude of the task, and have no reason to hesitate in doing what is obviously needed. But bitter experiences are still coming, and they may still teach people the lesson of the moment, and give them the courage without which victory will remain only a meaningless "V."

July 12, 1942

## XII

The fundamental equation of the Indian nationalist political science is : hatred for the British is equal to love for India. In order to be a nationalist or a patriot, one does not need to take up a positive attitude as regards any of the innumerable outstanding problems of the social and economic life of the country. Nationalism has degenerated into racialism, which justifies negation of all freedom.

The demand for a National Government has become the token of patriotism. It would be a perfectly legitimate demand if it was for a democratic government. But the demand for a National Government has no political content. Its sponsors have not explained how it will be different from the present government.

The racialist demand for a National Government without any political content can be justified only on the assumption that any Indian is better than any Englishman ; if not actually better, at least preferable for governing India.

That may or may not be true. But there is no reason to take it for granted that the fulfilment of the demand of racialism would mean national freedom. If the nationalist movement had not deliberately prevented the growth of political consciousness on the part of the masses, the latter would certainly oppose the establishment of a National Government as demanded by the nationalist parties and their satellites.

There are differences about the composition of the National Government. If it comes to actually forming,

it, there will be no end of squabbles about which party will have how many seats. But on one point, there is a general agreement. The National Government must be formed by the *principal* parties. Even Mr Jinnah would deal only with "recognised" parties, although there is so little chance of these parties ever recognising the fundamental demand of the Muslim League. The recognised parties evidently are the Congress and perhaps the Hindu Mahasabha, which, in their turn, consider themselves as the principal parties. The rest of political India has been characterised by Mr Jinnah as "miscellaneous groups"—riff raffs, so to say.

Now, these 'principal' and 'recognised' parties, among themselves, do a good deal of talking. They condemn the present Government for an endless variety of sins of commission and omission. Their pretensions may sound very plausible, and the charge sheet against the alien bureaucracy is not altogether groundless. But in the midst of all this do, they have scrupulously refrained from saying how they propose to promote the national welfare of India, which the present Government is said to be altogether careless about.

At present, they all appear to be very much concerned about the defense of the country, and contend that only a National Government, supported by the principal and recognised parties can alone organise the defense. But in that respect also, they have not said what they propose to do.

The fundamental problem to this respect is how to enthuse the masses of the Indian people with the will to resist an invasion. The enthusiasm should rise to the highest pitch, so that people might be willing to make the greatest sacrifices and perform the most incredible feats.

of heroism. The present Government has failed to adopt measures which might produce that result. There is no reason to believe that the National Government supported by the principal and recognised parties will do what the present Government has failed to do.

Whatever may be the fault of the present Government, it cannot be suspected of the desire to lose the war—to hand over India to the Japs. Why has it, then, failed to take measures which might enthuse the masses with the will to defend the country? Because the required measures are such as will encroach upon vested interests. They would not be liked any more by the British capitalists in this country than by Indian industrialists and merchants who are the power behind the principal parties demanding the right to form a National Government. If the alien bureaucracy has been so very considerate about Indian vested interests, a National Government is bound to be much more obliging to its patrons. The measures needed to create the conditions for a successful defense of the country will not be taken.

The Chambers of Commerce are ardent supporters of the demand for a National Government. They are pressing for the release of the Congress leaders and resumption of negotiations for a settlement. Not a few Indian industrial magnates, including some of the biggest, are known to have manoeuvered the closing down of their plants as protest against the arrest of the Congress leaders and in support of the demand for their immediate release and the formation of a National Government.

If these gentlemen were really so very anxious to increase the war potential of India, it has always been, and is still, in their power to do so. They need not wait

to perform that patriotic duty until a National Government of their choice is in power. It will be very difficult to prove that the present Government is preventing them from doing the needful. Does the alien bureaucracy force them to let their employees have a share of the profit they are making from war supplies? Why has the price of foodstuffs risen sky high, and why the scarcity? The production of food has not fallen. The population of the country has not suddenly grown. A man does not eat twice or three times as much as 5000 as he joins the army. The fall in commercial exports owing to the difficulties of maritime transport more than compensates for the additional supplies for the armed forces. Prices are forced up by wholesale grain dealers and profiteers. They are also being hoarded by the moneyed men in the villages. All these worthies are ardent patriots—not only followers, but financiers of the principal parties. Artificially created high cost of living has reduced real wages. Workers may still get the same number of rupees, or even a few more here and there. But today a rupee buys much less than before the war. So the workers are actually earning less. On the other hand, the peasants have to pay much more for the manufactured things they buy, but do not get proportionately more for the food grains, although the price of the latter has gone up so much. Traders make huge profits, and they constitute the social basis of the principal parties.

So, a National Government supported by the principal parties will be a government of the Indian industrialists and merchants, who do not stand in a substantially different relation to the bulk of the people—the producing and consuming masses—than the foreign exploiters. Under such a National Government, the economic

condition of the masses will not only not improve, but will deteriorate. Because, it will be a government of the war-profiteers, who will ultimately find Pétainism to be the most practical, because profitable, politics.

By insisting upon the monopoly of the principal parties, the advocates of the National Government give away their game. The insistence means that all other political parties, not under the domination of patriotic vested interest, should be excluded. It means that workers' and peasants' representatives shall have no place in the National Government. It must be above and beyond the control of the ninety per cent of the population. The sponsors of the National Government, therefore, want not a National Government, in the democratic sense—not a government of the Indian people. They want power for a privileged minority. The latter enjoy privileges under the present regime. It wants power so that the privileges would be much more. The masses cannot be mobilised in the struggle for such a fraudulent freedom if they are allowed to think in political and economic terms. Hence the necessity to whip up racialism, in the frenzy of which the multitude may madly part with elementary human rights, and even welcome their own betrayal as national freedom.

September 13, 1942

## **APPENDIX**

### **SOME OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

#### **Regarding the Solution of the Indian Problem**

*(Submitted during the Cripps negotiations,  
Delhi, March, 1942)*

1. This war is going to change the world. India cannot remain unchanged, not only as regards political status; her economic life also is bound to receive a great impetus.

Absolutely Sovereign national States will be an anachronism, and economic inter-relations among nations will be closer. To progress politically towards the goal of a greater freedom, the Indian people will find it necessary and desirable to transcend the limits of relatively isolated national existence. The potentialities of their economic life will be fully unfolded only in the context of a scheme of world reconstruction after the war.

2. The history of the relations between Britain and India is bound to culminate in a free, mutually beneficial, association of two countries, as equal members of a commonwealth. The necessary constitutional procedure for the formal establishment of the new relation, to be in force forthwith, for all practical purposes, will be completed immediately after the war.

3. The establishment of a National Government, responsible to the present Legislative Assembly, is not constitutionally possible. If parliamentary practice is to be strictly observed, the leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly will have to be asked to form the government. Firstly, that would be a party government,

not a National Government. Secondly, not commanding a majority of the House, the Congress Party will not be able to form a stable government, and the second largest party (Muslim League) will not join a coalition except on conditions not acceptable to others. The general political position is even more difficult. In the midst of a war, which has reached India, it is not permissible to place in uncontrolled power a party whose supreme leader advocates non-resistance to aggression.

4 But India must be defended and the responsibility belongs primarily to the Indians. Everything should be done to enable them to discharge the responsibility. The establishment of a National Government has been delayed long enough, by the obstructionist policy of the Congress and the unreasonable and unhelpful attitude of other parties. With the ruthless invaders at our very door, no more precious time should be wasted in hoping against hope, and in recriminations.

5 The measure necessary for the defense of India's freedom and the promotion of the welfare of the Indian masses is the formation of a War Cabinet on a non-party basis, a government composed not of party representatives, but of individuals chosen on their merits. Co-operation of gentlemen possessed of the requisite qualifications, who may belong to this or that party, should also be welcomed, provided that they come forward to shoulder collective responsibility as individuals, not answerable to any party.

6 In these fatal days, the cause of India's political progress and general welfare can be promoted only by far-sighted patriots who realise that the national welfare of India cannot be separated from that of the rest of the world, and that therefore it is

conditional upon the defeat of the forces of evil bent upon the destruction of all the achievements of modern civilisation, which have laid down a solid foundation for a new world of greater freedom and equality. India is not wanting in such patriots. A government composed of men chosen from among them will be a truly national government as well as a strong government, which the country needs so very urgently in this great crisis.

7. Practical promotion of the welfare of the people is the essence of democracy. Defeat of the Axis Powers and destruction of the evil of Fascism, which has become an international phenomenon, are the conditions for the future welfare of mankind, which includes the Indian nation. Therefore, a government which will set aside all other considerations for concentrating all energy and resources on the crucial task of winning this war, will be a truly democratic government. By applying itself to this task, with a single-minded purpose, it will be representing the will of the Indian masses, who would suffer untold miseries if Fascism triumphed. Anti-Fascism, not only in profession but in practice, is to day the only reliable token of democratic conviction, and the sole standard of popular representativeness.

8. In view of the above considerations, a National Government could and should make room also for Englishmen who, though not born in this country, have made it their home for all practical purposes. Their future is bound up with the future of this country. They must have a share in the making of that future. Nor can the experience represented by the official element be altogether dispensed with during the transition period. It will only strengthen the National Government, without

a general election is out of the question. A general election of all the Provincial Assemblies as well as of the Central Assembly will be held immediately after the war. Until then provincial administrations may be carried on by Emergency Ministries, to be composed also according to the principles visualised for application in the establishment of a National Government in the Centre. Until the next election, under a new Constitution, the Ministers will regard themselves as responsible directly to the people, and discharge the responsibility by introducing measures which will protect popular interest and promote popular welfare, in addition to the supreme task of the moment, which is to intensify war efforts no matter however great sacrifices that might involve.

PART II

FREEDOM AND  
FORMAL DEMOCRACY

The Radical Democratic Party stands for a thorough reconstruction of the national life. Its political object is the establishment of democratic freedom, which will mean effective political power for the people. It stands for that kind of Swaraj, instead of dreaming of a legendary Ramraj. It strives not only for national freedom, but also for the social emancipation of the toiling masses. It is the torch-bearer of enlightenment, which will dispel obscurantism in the political as well as the spiritual life of the country. It advocates modernism in every walk of life as against revivalism. It wants the disinherited to come to their own and enjoy the richness and fulness of life on this earth. It wants man to be the master of the world and the maker of his own destiny.

Such a programme is bound to have an irresistible appeal not only for the toiling masses, but also for all others who stand for democratic freedom and general progress. The relation between this programme and the fight against Fascism is also evident. Fascism stands for the destruction of the political, social and cultural ideals incorporated in this programme. The devotion to those ideals of freedom and the determination to attain them as soon as possible inspire us to favour India's participation in the war against Fascism. Those who believe that the fight for Indian freedom as depicted in the programme of our party can disregard the issue of the war against Fascism, either do not realise the gravity of the menace of Fascism or entertain fraudulent ideas of freedom.

With our firm conviction that the attainment of Indian freedom as conceived in our party programme is conditional upon the defeat of international Fascism we stand to day between the devil and the deep sea, so to say. Narrow minded nationalists carry on a campaign of abuse against us, because they do not understand the issues involved, nor can they appreciate the values at stake. On the other hand, the Government is suspicious, because we are avowed revolutionaries. But the courage of conviction and a clear vision of the goal will enable us to steer through the dangerous waters between Scylla and Charybdis.

It is natural that avowed revolutionaries should be feared by those who still cling to the forlorn hope of maintaining the *status quo* even after the war. Let them find a morbid pleasure in their dream. But they are foolish to question our *bona fides*. Even if our *bona fides* are foolishly doubted, we do not feel insulted by the foolishness of the purblind bureaucrats. We pity their stupidity, because it may ultimately ruin themselves.

The Government seems to be afraid of the genuine anti-Fascists. We are prepared to shoulder the responsibility which others, with big names and purses, are afraid of. Yet, the Government prefers the ruinous policy of drift, hoping ultimately to secure the co-operation of parties whose will to fight Fascism is a matter of grave doubt. It is obvious that popular opinion cannot be fully enlisted in support of the war unless the artificially kept up influence of the Congress is destroyed. The Congress is fighting the Government. It is opposed to India's participation in the war. Yet, the Government is very reluctant to do anything which might seriously

injure the Congress. The Congress is the most powerful bulwark of conservatism in the public life of India. Hence the anxiety of the Government to see that it remains intact, and the concern of others to bring about a reconciliation between the Congress and the Government.

As a matter of fact, the Congress influence is limited to a vocal minority. The control of the press and a liberally financed authoritarian machinery are the source of strength of the Congress. The vast bulk of the population is only slightly touched by Congress propaganda. The masses can be swayed by the Congress because there is no other popular party in the field.

The present policy of drift, which is seriously impairing India's defensive and striking power, is justified on the ground that the Government is helpless in the face of the obstructionist attitude of the major political party in the country. Is the Government really so helpless? Could it not change the situation, if it wanted to? The forces are there to be mobilised. The genuinely anti-Fascist elements organised in our party are only too eager to shoulder the responsibility. The only thing that the Government need do is to let us have the chance of doing so. We believe that this is our war as much as that of England. We believe that Fascism must be defeated if the Indian people are to attain the goal of democratic freedom. What, then, is the obstacle in the way to ending the present constitutional deadlock, so that the war efforts of India may be democratised, and therefore be more effective? The Government is really not helpless. It could easily overcome the difficulty of the obstructionism on the part of the major political party. It seems rather to be paralysed by the fear for the genuine anti-Fascists who, in order to be so, must be

avowed revolutionaries. But the situation cannot continue like this indefinitely. The Government must choose. The choice will be forced upon it as soon as it will realise that, if the situation is not radically changed, India will be rather a liability than an asset in critical moments.

The Congress majority in a number of provincial Legislatures has become an empty formality. The burning issue of the day was not before the country at the time of the election. Therefore, it is correct neither constitutionally nor factually to maintain that the Congress policy reflects the opinion of the majority as regards India's relation to the war. A fictitious formal majority should not be allowed to dominate the situation. The Congress claim to represent the majority should be tested. Re-election of the Legislatures, however, will not be the true test, because only a fraction of the Indian population is enfranchised.

In the present emergency, it is not permissible to lay too much stress on mere formalities. Before the electorate is asked to give its verdict on the burning issue of the day, it must be exhaustively explained to the country, the monopoly of the press should be broken, so that an atmosphere be created in which public opinion could be formed intelligently and independently. There can be little doubt about the result of a general election if it takes place after a period of preparation on these lines. Avowed anti-Fascists, who stand for India's unconditional participation in the war, and represent social and political ideals which appeal to the masses, should therefore be forthwith associated with the Government of the country. That position of vantage will enable them to do, what they are doing even to day,

more effectively, and build up a popular party to challenge the totalitarianism of the Congress.

The Government would be ill-advised to fall back upon the co-operation of leaders without any following. It must enlist the co-operation of those who can command an organised popular backing, even if they may not have that at present to the fullest extent. The criterion of the choice will be the readiness to face a general election as soon as possible. Our party has repeatedly declared that readiness.

(From the Presidential Address to the Maharashtra Provincial Conference of the Radical Democratic Party, held at Poona on March 22nd and 23rd, 1941.)

The latest pronouncements of the Viceroy as well as of the Secretary of State for India are cries in the wilderness. A section of the British press is echoing that pitiful cry, although some seem to be despairing about a generous response. The ignorance of, or disregard for, the ugly realities of the Indian situation is amazing. Answering a question by a Labour Member in the Parliament, the other day, Mr Amery said that he was not aware that there was a great danger of a great amount of Fifth Column work in India, and the war efforts being undermined thereby.

We have all along pointed out this danger, although the authorities chose to ignore it. Now, the evidence for its existence comes from the white hope of the deluded and misinformed "friends of India" in Britain. In a press conference in Bombay on December 16, commenting on the Secretary of State's speech, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said: "The enormous bitterness of the people to day is greater than ever against the British Government's policy in India. Anyone who takes the trouble to find out what the people's feeling is, has only to speak to the man in the street, from Peshawar to Cape Comorin. I have never known feelings so strained and bitter." The speaker did not describe the form this bitterness has taken recently. Nor would he admit that the present pro Fascist expression of the bitterness is very largely determined by the attitude of leaders like himself.

Now, he pleads helplessness to control the forces which have been unleashed by the ill conceived policy of

popular leaders like himself. On the same occasion, he made the following significant admission: "No politician, whatever his individual view might be, can ignore this background." So, the leaders are not acting according to their better judgment, but for the sake of popularity allowing their "individual view" to be suppressed by popular prejudices and uncontrolled emotions, which have transformed Indian nationalism into a spiritual ally of the Axis Powers.

A certain section of public opinion in England seems to be at last losing the illusion which prevented a realistic appreciation of the Indian situation and the correct approach to the problem of tackling it. The "Manchester Guardian", for example, writes : "It does not look as though we should solve the Indian deadlock through the aid of Mr. Gandhi and Pandit Nehru, who unite in saying that the release of Congress prisoners makes no essential difference. Pandit Nehru is unhelpful. He fears Hitler's victory. So, Pandit Nehru and his friends content themselves with drawing attention to certain aspects of freedom. Admirable as this is, it does not go far to destroy Hitler."

Even when making a fervent appeal for an understanding with the Congress, the "Evening Standard" writes : "Mr. Gandhi and Pandit Nehru are not much more helpful." Nevertheless, the same paper goes on to add : "The President of the Congress is less intransigent." That is an ill-founded optimism. The President has expressed entirely different views, and would never stand up against Gandhi and Nehru. Yet, hoping against hope, the paper writes : "If Britain started a new initiative, Indian parties, with India so gravely menaced, might be inclined to respond. Could not an attempt be made to

The leader of Indian "Socialist" Nationalism (or is it National Socialism?), who professes sympathy for higher ideals, but would not lift a finger to defend them, performed another feat of bravado while making deprecating remarks about Mr Amery's latest performance. He asked the British to get out. That is all very well. But the crucial question is whom does he want to get in? His own counsel of despair is an admission that his nationalism can only demand independence, to be granted by others with power and dignity, but has no power to defend India. What does he, then, propose to do if the British get out on his orders? Has he the guts of Cromwell, whom he apes? The tragedy is that nationalism cannot save India. It may still be its doom.

The rude reality of the situation is that the Indian people, with a few exceptions, are indifferent to the danger of Fascist invasion. That is the net result of the activities of the organisations and leaders, whose co-operation the Government is so anxious to enlist.

The Government also has its share of the responsibility of having created this situation. It refused to trust the anti-Fascists, and banked on the eventual co-operation of the non-cooperators, who could not have acted as they did, if they were not sympathisers of Fascism. The bitterness against the policy might have prompted them to act in that way. But the fact is that they acted as they did, and they must be judged on their action. Even now they would not lift a finger to save the country from the possible misfortune of coming under Fascist domination, which Nehru characterises as the "greater evil", because the old masters would not grant them freedom. Yet, even to-day, the rulers of India entertain the

illusion of fighting foreign Fascism in alliance with the native prototype.

What is the value of the co-operation so very frantically solicited? The nationalist and communalist leaders have misled and confused the country during these two fateful years. They have undermined the very foundation of a popular defence. What, then, can they do now to reinforce the defensive power of the country? The Government think of defence only in terms of funds, production of war materials and recruits for the army. The co-operation of the erstwhile non-cooperators is not needed for that purpose. All that has been done in the teeth of their opposition. If nothing more is needed, to guarantee the defence of the country, it is not necessary for the Government to canvass popular co-operation.

But something else *is* needed. The Government shall realise that before long, if it is already not felt. It is popular will and enthusiasm to defend the country. What is needed, therefore, is to undo the mischief done by the so-called popular leaders and organisations. Evidently, they cannot deliver the goods. Pandit Nehru admitted that, when he made the damaging confession that "no politician, whatever his individual views might be, can ignore this background" of popular bitterness.

The goods can be delivered only by those who all along have been of the opinion that Fascism must be fought and defeated as a matter of principle, irrespective of the attitude of the Government. They are not afraid of the popular prejudice, which is based on ignorance and pro-Fascist propaganda carried on on the pretext of anti-imperialism. They know that the mass mind can be moulded, and they are convinced that the toiling masses, composing the vast bulk of the people, can be mobilised

in the fight against Fascism, foreign as well as native, as soon as they will be fully informed about the dreadful nature of the enemy. If the anti-Fascists have not been as yet able to do more for moulding public opinion than they have done, and notwithstanding all sorts of disadvantages, they have accomplished a good deal—that is due to the foolishness of the Government. Let that foolishness end, and the atmosphere necessary for the mobilisation of popular energy for the defence of the country will be created. But exactly those, who alone can save the situation, are not yet trusted by the Government. That is the irony of the situation.

The proper approach to the problem of defence will be to leave the quarrelling, bragging and bargaining "popular" leaders alone, and to help the organisation of a powerful propaganda campaign for turning the tide of public opinion. The task must be entrusted to a popular party. A party willing to undertake that task of the moment can alone be the reliable popular basis for the Government.

Propaganda is among the most powerful weapons of modern warfare. The Government has not learned to appreciate the value of this weapon, much less to wield it effectively. Its pro-war propaganda until now has produced the contrary of the desired result. A thorough understanding of mass psychology is the condition for successful propaganda. And mass mentality can be moulded in the desired direction only by expert psychologists. To move the masses, appeals should be made to primitive emotions. Strictly truthful propaganda, that is to say, copious and systematic supply of authentic information, is sure to make the masses fearful of Fascism. A thing feared is hated. And hatted is the

incentive for a determined fight. Propaganda must be very skilfully conducted. It must not be simply pro-British, but anti-Fascist and pro-Indian. Simultaneously with the fear of Fascism, the hope for a brighter future should be placed before the masses in order to encourage them to undertake a fight which will lead to the realisation of their hope. The Government, therefore, should forthwith seek the co-operation of those who are qualified for wielding the powerful weapon of propaganda, which alone can save the situation.

There is much talk about civil defence. How can there be any such thing when the bulk of the civil population look upon a possible invasion as god-sent. A radical change in mass psychology is the condition for any effective civil defence, which is primarily a measure against the internal enemy. Those who are still undermining the home front cannot bring about that change. Therefore, they cannot do anything for the defence of the country. It is idle to bank on their eventual co-operation. Firstly, there is little hope of that co-operation ever coming. And secondly, it would be of doubtful value, if it is ever secured.

There is only one way out of the imminent danger. The constitutional deadlock cannot be ended, except by a thorough realignment of the political forces. Those who are not only willing to, but are actually fighting Fascism in every possible way, are the representatives of Indian democracy. They must be in positions of power, if popular energy and enthusiasm is to be enlisted for the defence of the country, if India is to contribute to the defeat of Fascism and advance towards her own eventual liberation.

The policy of the Government should be to quicken that process. The rise of the party of Indian democracy should be helped. By giving that help, the British will help themselves, because only true Indian democrats can have the courage to admit the identity of interest which is bound to mould the future relation between the two countries.

December 28, 1941

## II

The Government decided to release the Congress-leaders with some expectations, if not actually with high hopes. The decision was taken after the Government had been persuaded to believe that two years experience had convinced the Congress leaders of the futility of a purely negative policy. After their release, for a time, it appeared that there was a turn in the trend of their thought. The pronouncements of some of them, particularly of Mr. Rajagopalachari and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, were interpreted as definite gestures of co-operation in the fight against Fascism. Although the two outstanding Congress leaders were believed to represent divergent views, it was believed that, on the immediate issue of lining up India on the side of the progressive world forces, they were going to pull together. The view was, however, based very largely on wishful thinking and a complete lack of understanding of the relation of forces inside the Congress, and of the sympathies and convictions of the great bulk of Congressmen. The greatest mistake on the part of those who shared that view was to underestimate the influence of the Mahatma and to ignore the subtle and devious manners in which that influence is exercised.

We did not share the illusion about the Congress leaders getting out of their mental rut. The very pronouncements which were hailed as holding out rays of hope precluded any such illusion. Whenever he opened his mouth in public, Pandit Nehru made it clear that he was not going to budge an inch from the position.

taken up by the Congress in the beginning of the war, no matter what might have happened in the meantime, and what may happen in the future. In a certain section of the British press, as well as in some of the Anglo Indian papers in this country, much was made of his effusions about Russia and China. But it should have been clear to the moderately critical reader that, for practical purposes, all those lyrical outbursts did not amount to anything more than mere lip sympathy. In any case, he never gave it to be understood that he was going to do anything to give expression to his professed sympathies for the progressive world forces. Now there can be absolutely no doubt about his attitude. His speech at the A I C C meeting was a hymn of hatred. That must be a very rude shock for the ill informed "friends of India" in England, who counted upon the influence of Harrow eventually counter acting that of Wardha. It remains to be seen whether the shock will cure them of the curious idea of democracy which identifies several hundred "amateur politicians", as H G. Wells puts it, with India.

There is no doubt that Mr Rajagopalachari was very anxious to come out of the wilderness, but there is doubt about the reason for which he wanted to do so. His approach to the problem is not idealistic, as in the case of Pandit Nehru. It is said to be realistic, the better description, however, would be, utilitarian. He thinks that Indians should seize whatever power may be available. He is not very scrupulous about the purpose for which the power is to be employed. In return for an appreciable share in the authority of the Government, he would most probably help the war, even if it were waged against the Soviet Union. Therefore, he

is certainly the man for the die-hard imperialists, who still rule this country. They hope that he would be able to carry the Congress, or split it. Among the politicians and public men of this country, there are many of his kind. But it would not be worth while for the Government to yield some places of authority to individuals. Mr. Rajagopalachari was expected to command a considerable following. The expectation again has turned out to be unfounded.

A majority of the Congress parliamentarians shared Rajagopalachari's views. But, compelled to choose between him and the Mahatma, they had to follow the latter, who won the election for the Congress, and without whom the Congress will not be able to win the next election. The Mahatma's relation with the Congress deprives the latter of any serious democratic significance. As a matter of fact, in the last election, people did not vote for the Congress, but for the Mahatma. And in the next election they cannot be expected to behave otherwise. Therefore, to identify the Congress with the country, is to identify the latter with one individual. That is certainly not a democratic view of the situation.

However, it is now clear that the Congress will not deliver the goods, even if it is still believed that it alone can do so. But this lesson may not as yet be learned by all, and consequently, on the pretext of being very scrupulous about formal democratic practice, democracy may continue to be overridden. From the side of the Government, it will be argued: What can we do, so long as the major political parties refuse to accept responsibility? And from the other side, the retort will be that the Government is not conceding to the demand of the

people, and therefore popular co operation in the war cannot take place. Between the two formalist camps, the country alone will suffer.

Therefore, the idea of democracy must be realistically appraised. The formalist notion must go. Democracy is not counting of heads. Particularly to day, it has a very concrete expression. Fascism is the avowed enemy of democracy. Therefor the test of democracy to day is the readiness to fight against Fascism, subordinating all other considerations. The Congress leaders, even a man like Pandit Nehru, who is so very loud about his abhorrence for Fascism and lyrical about his love for the progressive forces, are not prepared to take up that attitude towards the fight against Fascism. Their main consideration is their prestige, which is camouflaged by the demand for independence. The demand appears to be very plausible. The enforcement of this demand will be the vindication of democracy in India. But there is another side of the picture. If the demand is not accepted by the British, India, in so far as she is represented by the Congress, will not do the democratic duty of helping the fight against Fascism. And if Fascism wins, democracy will be destroyed everywhere, and India cannot be expected to be an exception. Therefore, the plausible demand of independence as the price for India's co operation in the fight against Fascism, cannot hide the fact that the Congress leaders are not primarily concerned with the defence of democracy. How can they, then, be regarded as the representatives of Indian democracy. In the last analysis, their position is that they would rather see India overrun by triumphant Fascism than to participate in the common struggle against that danger, unless the British Government

would make some concession to their prestige.: The latest resolution of the A. I. C. C. makes that clear once again. The Congress leaders have neither learned anything, nor forgotten anything.

Incidentally, the last A. I. C. C. session has thrown some light on the currents and cross-currents of Congress politics. For one thing, the voting was very significant. It has been interpreted differently by different people. Wishful thinkers, still looking upon Mr. Rajagopalachari as their saviour, may interpret the voting as an indication of his large potential following. That may or may not be the case. But the decisive fact is that Mr. Rajagopalachari did not dare to press his point of view, even after the Mahatma formally abdicated. On the other hand, the voting has been interpreted as the triumph of non-violence. If that is the case, there was no reason for the overwhelming majority to keep quiet. However, it is very significant that nearly eighty per cent. of those who claim to be the custodians of India's destiny, should not know their duty in this critical moment. That fact alone indicates that intellectual subservience and spiritual demoralisation have reached their climax inside the Congress. That being its internal condition, the Congress cannot possibly be expected to act as the leader of the country in these crucial days. It may still continue to confuse the situation, on the one hand on the authority of the Mahatma and, on the other hand, owing to the anxiety of Imperialism not to harm irreparably the position of the politicians who have proved to be so very dependable administrators of its affairs. That anxiety alone explains the short-sighted policy of the Government, which is doing itself no less harm than to the country.

Another incident in the A I C C meeting is also to be noted. It is an eye opener. An amendment moved by a member who was associated with the Forward Bloc declared that India demanded freedom so that a free India could decide which parties in this war she should join. Those with an insight into the mind of the average Congressman would regard this amendment as indicating the opinion of the great majority of them. It should be noted that the amendment is diametrically opposed to the views expressed for example by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. If there was more courage of conviction the amendment most probably would have secured a very large vote. As a matter of fact, it was not an amendment, it was an effort to make explicit what is implicit in the official resolution. It should be remembered that the famous September declaration of the Woking Committee also wanted independence so that India might freely decide to join the war. The grievance was against the fact that India had been declared a belligerent country without being consulted. There was no point in laying so much emphasis on that technical default, which incidentally was no breach of constitutional procedure, unless it was maintained that, given the freedom, India might have decided otherwise. This basic ambiguity in the Congress policy has never been removed. Therefore, the amendment to the official resolution in the last A I C C meeting was not altogether out of place. It is significant that none of the sponsors of the official resolution thought it necessary to state that the amendment went against the spirit of the resolution. Therefore, it is legitimate to assume that the amendment was not so regarded. It was rejected simply because there are very few members of the A I C C with the courage to vote

against any resolution moved on behalf of the Working Committee.

In spite of all these revealing facts, most probably efforts will still continue to coax the Congress leaders, particularly of the Rajagopalachari school, to return to office and share the responsibility of defending the country. Indeed, people with equally ambiguous views have already become members of "War Cabinets". Members of the party led by Subhas Chandra Bose have become Ministers of Bengal, which may before long be actually invaded by the Japanese. In this curious situation, it is quite natural to bear the remark that it is very difficult to distinguish between the organisation of so-called civil defence and of the Reception Committee for the coming hero. If the Congress leaders are incapable of learning anything or forgetting anything, the Government is equally incapable of doing so. Between the two, the stage is being prepared for a gigantic catastrophe.

Only a determined, rather desperate, effort on the part of the really progressive and democratic sections of the Indian people can possibly organise some action on the part of the latter which alone may save the situation, yet in this eleventh hour. Their number appears to be very small. But they certainly represent the Indian democracy, if that is to be conceived as the welfare of the popular masses. If the present rulers of our country were not so incredibly short-sighted, they would still allow democracy to assert itself and help the turning of the tide. But victory of democracy will not only mean successful defence against Japanese invasion, but will also sweep away many things which have become completely antiquated and harmful for the Indians as well as for others

looking forward to a brighter future for all. Therefore, the present rulers of our country would rather continue hoping against hope, thus risking everything, than to act courageously, guided by enlightened self interest, if not by any higher ideals. The future of India thus hangs in the balance, and at the moment the balance is heavily tipped against the Indian people. But in critical moments like this, great things happen unexpectedly : therefore, we can only carry on with the hope that the intervention of some unexpected force will still save India from the conspiracy of what appears to be a veritable unholy alliance of reaction, stupidity and selfishness.

June 25, 1942

### III

Last Week, from two different quarters, came two hints which may be taken as indicating the course of political developments in India in the near future.

In a special interview, for the 'Tribune' of Lahore, Sir Stafford Cripps revealed that the interim arrangement proposed by the British War Cabinet was not meant to be technically fitted into the frame of the present Constitution. He said that the proposal was for the Indian leaders, to whom the offer was made, to join the Viceroy's Executive Council, and then discuss with the Viceroy ways and means, by which the Council could function more as a Cabinet than as an Executive Council. The present Constitution makes no room for a Cabinet in the Centre. So, what was contemplated, was an emergency measure. The proposed Central Government, which was expected, in practice, to develop into a Cabinet, was not to have the support of a parliamentary majority.

The Congress leaders were also thinking in that way. Sir Stafford quoted the following passage from an interview given by Pandit Nehru: "For the first time, the question ( majority rule ) was definitely emphasised by Sir Stafford Cripps in his letter dated April 10. We were thinking in terms really not even of Legislature, but of a Cabinet consisting of fifteen persons." Thus, the Congress leaders were not demanding power by virtue of their controlling parliamentary majority. They do not have a majority in the Central Legislature. Therefore, in quest of power, they wanted to forget all about the Central Legislature.

Why, then, was the far reaching offer made exclusively to them, and, as given to be understood at that time, was to be withdrawn if they refused to accept it?

The procedure was justified as the only one permissible by democratic practice and under the given Constitution. Now it is revealed that, had the Congress leaders acted more reasonably, the interim arrangement would be neither technically within the frame of the present Constitution, nor according to the conventional democratic practice. It was to be an emergency measure. The non co operation of the Congress leaders does not minimise the need for such measures, on the contrary, it aggravates the emergency. Therefore, it is all the more necessary to go ahead with the contemplated emergency measure.

Sir Stafford did not say whether he has changed the view that, upon the Congress refusal to accept it, the British offer lapsed. But that view held by him, and presumably by the War Cabinet until now, cannot be maintained after he has revealed that the proposed interim arrangement was to be an emergency measure. If one party is entitled to form an emergency government, irrespective of the parliamentary position, other parties could not be kept out of power on the ground that they cannot fulfil the requirements of conventional democratic practice under the existing Constitution.

We wonder if it is permissible to assume that the British Government has come to realise that it was not wise for it to hold that the Cripps offer automatically lapsed upon the Congress refusing to accept it. Otherwise, it would not be necessary for Sir Stafford to come out rather unexpectedly with the new interpretation of the offer. Therefore, his latest public pronouncement

may be taken as indicating the line of political development in India in the near future.

A few days afterwards, a very remarkable editorial appeared in the London 'Times'. According to it, the Cripps offer still stands. The 'Times' editorial can be interpreted as making explicit what was implicit in Sir Stafford's interview. The offer can no longer stand for the Congress leaders to change their mind and accept it. It is too late for any such turn of events, which may be still wished by some misinformed and misguided friends of India. The Congress leaders have burnt the bridge behind them and they have done so deliberately. In this situation, the Cripps offer can stand only to be implemented with the co-operation of others. The emergency measure should, therefore, be taken on the lines recommended by us all along since the day when the emergency was precipitated by Congress Ministries resigning, and subsequently by the Congress resolution to resist India's participation in the war. The power and responsibility offered to Congressmen should be given to other Indians without any further delay, and the Viceroy's Executive Council, reinforced by the inclusion of new men, capable of coping with the situation, should function "more as a Cabinet than as an Executive Council". Any delay in this logical action will lay the British Government open to the charge of mishandling a dangerous situation on the pretext of not violating democratic practice permissible under the given Constitution.

Why should it be assumed that fifteen (or any other number) of men, chosen from the Congress and communalist leaders, could give India a more representative National Government or a more efficient war Cabinet

than one that could be formed by another set of Indians with a firmer anti-Fascist conviction, with no meaner record of sacrifice and public service, with courageous far sight and the realistic view that India must sink or swim with the rest of the world arrayed in this war against the Axis Powers? This latter kind of people can be more confidently expected to appreciate the spirit of the offer, and begin working within limitations, which cannot be removed immediately, with the belief that practice will lay down the foundation for a freer and more democratic system of government. Those who are equipped with the talents of statesmanship and virtues of democratic leadership, cannot fail to see how the Viceroy's Council, if composed of the right sort of men, must function as a collective custodian of power and authority, and as a co-ordinated guide for action, should it successfully cope with the emergency. What is of still greater importance is that the aggravating emergency is bound to compel the Viceroy's Executive Council, assuming that it would not be composed of dead souls, to adopt such a policy as would mean the largest measure of democracy possible of practice under the present circumstances of the country.

The primary object of any Central Government under the present circumstances should be to win the war (Precisely for that reason, Congress leaders are not capable of giving India the kind of government she needs now) Therefore, all other considerations should be subordinated to whatever is necessary for winning the war. The exigencies of physical existence will shape the thoughts of men at the helm of affairs. They will be compelled to realise that certain measures must be taken in order to create popular enthusiasm in support of war.

efforts. The object of those measures will be to make the masses feel that they have a stake in the country, that it is worthwhile for them to fight and win, and to make all sacrifices for that purpose. Those measures will represent concrete expressions of democratic freedom.

Any Government which will introduce these measures will be a truly democratic government, no matter to which party its members belong, or if they belong to any party at all. They may not all even belong to this country. Democratic freedom is not a geographical conception. It is a human aspiration. It is immaterial how the aspiration is attained. And a government which is truly democratic in practice, which helps the realisation of the principle—'The greatest good to the greatest number',—is bound to be popular, and its popularity will be all the more abiding for being not won through demagogery.

On the other hand, in the absence of a government, truly democratic in practice, India will never find the power to defend herself and to contribute to the victory of the cause of freedom. There may be many among those, at present holding the reigns of her destiny, who do not realise this need of the moment. Blinded by their complacency, they alone can oppose the transfer of power and responsibility on the basis of an emergency arrangement. They may do so in the false belief that they are defending the democratic practice prescribed by the present Constitution. If they persist in their blunder, they may succeed only in helping the destruction of democracy, not only in India, but throughout the world.

The spectre of this danger has been haunting us. The dead weight of that fear is lifted by Sir Stafford's latest interview and the 'Times' editorial. We are in the midst of an emergency which aggravates daily owing

to causes external and internal While the danger of invasion still remains ( indeed, it may soon come from a different direction ), nothing is being done to build up an unshakable home front No army, however well equipped, can ward off an invasion if its rear is insecure. That is the lesson to be learned from the first two years of war in Europe as well as from the story of the swift Japanese advance up to the Indian frontier

To cope with the emergency, India needs a strong government which must act democratically under the given circumstances It is not possible to establish a formally democratic government-with parliamentary majority and all that Therefore, let it be established in the only practical way-as an emergency measure The sooner the better No more wishful thinking No more toying with ill-conceived liberalism Essence is more important than formality Face the emergency courageously and place India on the road to democratic freedom

June 28 1942

## IV

The Government of a country is supposed to be impartial. It claims to protect all interests even-handedly. To do so, *theoretically*, is said to be the function of the State. But this theory is a mere fiction. It is never and nowhere practised. It is not practised, and cannot be practised, because it simply runs counter to the realities of social existence.

The Government of India, being mostly composed of foreigners, has all along laid particular emphasis on the claim of impartiality. Because of its being so composed, it claims to be above and beyond the influence of any particular section of the Indian people. It claims to do justice even-handedly to all and sundry— from the ruling princes to the peasants; and from the industrial magnates to the lowly wage-earner.

It is not necessary to question the sincerity of this claim of impartiality, in order to show how during the present crisis it is preventing the Government to do the needful for its own existence, not to mention the protection of the people in general from the madness or evil designs of malevolent forces. The theory of impartiality being a fiction, it is altogether irrelevant to enquire whether it is sincere or insincere.

In the present crisis, all practices according to the fictitious theory of Governmental impartiality only offer protection to Fascism. And the worst of it is that those practices continue even when their harmful results can no longer be hidden. If it were a matter of protecting or combating Fascism abstractly, one might not expect the Government of India to act differently. But it is not an abstract question of fighting Fascism. It is a matter of:

self protection The theory of impartiality has driven the Government to a position of refusing to injure, indeed of protecting, the forces which are promoting the open revolt against it If there was any truth in the theory, it could not lead to such an absurd position.

As a matter of fact, the Government of India, like the Government in any other country, was never impartial It always favoured a certain section of the Indian people. It was natural for it to do so Because it was a matter of self preservation Its existence required the support and friendship of a certain section of the Indian people There was an identity of interest which constituted the social foundation of the Imperialist State in India To day, the Government of India is in the danger of hanging itself with the bond of that identity of interest. It can escape that tragic fate only by throwing off the pretension of impartiality which it never practised In other words, it has never been impartial, now the time has come when, for its own existence, if not for any nobler purpose, it must find new friends, and deal drastically with false friends who are acting treacherously

The object of counter revolution being to protect vested interest against changes necessary for general progress and welfare, it is always promoted by the established State which is everywhere controlled by those having vested interest in the old order Because it enjoys the protection of the State, counter revolution succeeds more often than revolution No other single factor contributed more to the growth and ultimate triumph of Fascism than the protection of the established State. The protection was not withheld even when the Fascist movement proclaimed its object to be to overthrow the established democratic State

It was expected that Fascism would not enjoy that advantage in India. Just as in Germany, in this country also Fascism was bound to gather strength with the slogan of national liberation. Consequently, it was to be a movement directed against the Imperialist State. Such a relation appeared to preclude the possibility of an alliance between rising Fascism and the established State—an alliance which characterised the march of counter-revolution in a number of European countries in recent times. But the popular saying that blood is thicker than water has proved to be even truer than ordinarily. The superficial antagonism between nationalism and the foreign Government could not destroy the identity of interest between the latter and native vested interest. A counter-revolution, which expresses itself in our time as Fascism, is backed up by vested interests. That relation, which obtains under all circumstances, has guaranteed Indian Fascism the protection or connivance or toleration, at any rate, of the Government. Otherwise, India would not be in the present perilous position.

Because it demanded national freedom, Indian Nationalism was believed to be a democratic movement. Although it naturally wanted to enlist mass support, it never put any clear social content into its programme. As a matter of fact, it represented the aspirations of the upper classes who have vested interest in the established socio-economic order protected by the Imperialist State. Of course, genuinely democratic and progressive elements also participated in the nationalist movement, actuated by ideas and inspired by ideals not at all favoured by its patrons. The reactionary nature of the nationalist movement has at last been clearly exposed during the present

crisis. This nature is determined by the fact that the national freedom desired by the movement does not include freedom for the bulk of the population from economic exploitation and social injustices. National freedom has come to be a purely racial conception without any social content.

On the other hand the British Government of the country also rested upon the support of the upper classes, having vested interests in the established order of things. Thus, the two apparently conflicting forces, namely, Indian Nationalism and the British Government of the country, are now exposed to have the self same social basis. This fundamental fact of the situation explains the failure of the Government to cope with the situation —its failure, or even deliberate refusal, to do what is obviously necessary for its own safety. It appears that to suppress Indian Fascism, which is rising up in open revolt against it, it is required to cut down the branch on which it is sitting. That would be a stupid thing to do, were it not a fact that a tree has more than one branch. If the Government would only have the commonsense, imagination and courage to support itself on another more secure branch, then there should be no difficulty in cutting down the one which is rotten to the core.

The present curious position of a Government still counting upon the loyalty of people who are in actual revolt against it, is the result of the fiction of impartiality, a fiction which has come to be such a prejudice as to paralyse the thought process even of the more intelligent. The Home Member of the Government of India, in his last speech in the Central Legislative Assembly, said that the present counter revolutionary outbreaks in this country were organised by people with

ample funds at their disposal, and that the Congress as an organisation was sustained by industrial interests. That was a very correct characterisation of the situation. But curiously enough, the policy of the Government is completely inadequate to cope with the situation.

The Congress leaders have been imprisoned. Numerous other persons have also been put under arrest. In the process of dealing with hooliganism on a large scale, the police and the army had to open fire, killing a number of human lives. But there has not been a single case of the powers behind the scene being brought to book for their misdeeds. From where are the ample funds at the disposal of the open rebels coming? The sources can be easily traced. As a matter of fact, they are open secrets. Why don't the liberal donors to the cause of the open rebellion receive their retribution? Has not the law any application for them?

In a number of cases, industrial plants producing supplies for the army were closed down at the instance of the owners. One could easily imagine what would happen if a similar dislocation of industry was caused by the workers. The Defence of India Rules would be enforced ruthlessly. Hundreds of workers would be arrested and thrown into prison. And perhaps stronger measures would be taken for restoring the normal working of the industries. But when the disorganisation is caused by the employers or their agents, law appears to be helpless.

Not only has the Government failed to strike at the powers behind the uprising of Indian Fascism; the reactionary elements which constitute the social basis of Indian Fascism still continue to be the confidant of the Government. Anti-war and pro-Fascist elements are

actually being patronised. Racialism runs rampant even among Indian Government officials and recognised loyalty lists. The Government seems to rely only on them, although they are also as anti-British as the professed nationalists. And Fascist sympathy or out and out acceptance of Fascism is only the counter part of the racial animosity of Indian Nationalism. And Fascism is the form of counter-revolution in our time. A Government engaged in a revolutionary war, thus, finds itself still allied with the forces of counter revolution. How can such a Government contribute anything to the victory in this war? The Government of India must break its association with Indian Fascism before it can do anything to promote the mobilisation of the Indian people in the world fight against Fascism.

This association may not be voluntary. And as long as it is there, it paralyses all possibility of the Government of India doing what is necessary in order to transform India into a sector of the international anti-Fascist war.

The fatal association is maintained on the plea that the Government of the country cannot do without the co-operation of all the parties. But this plausible plea disregards the fact that all the major political parties and the upper classes enjoying the confidence of the Government, together, do not constitute much more than ten per cent of the entire Indian people. The choice therefore is between ten per cent. and ninety per cent. And now that the ten per cent. are in open revolt, either directly or indirectly, there should be no difficulty in making the choice. As a matter of fact, there is no choice for the Government of India. It should either throw in its lot with the ninety per cent. of the Indian

people, make their cause its own, or it is doomed. Of course, in that case, the doom will overtake also the ninety per cent. of the Indian people. But that would not make the doom any more pleasant for the handful of Britishers who can even to-day make or mar the future of this country, and also their own.

How to establish the new alliance? That is the problem of the moment. Among the British rulers of this country, there must be at least some who have the intelligence to find the obvious approach to that problem. But even they seem to be paralysed by the theory of impartiality.

The ninety per cent. of the Indian people must be made vocal. Indian democracy must be helped to assert itself. But to begin with, the Government must win the confidence of the people, and that cannot be had except at the cost of the support of the reactionary upper classes who have until now enjoyed the confidence and patronage of the Government. Because, only those who can actually deliver the goods can successfully free the popular masses from the sway of nationalist demagogery. And only those with power to do things can deliver the goods required by the people. In other words, only the Government can do what is necessary to win the confidence of the people.

The vast bulk of the Indian people, the traditional dumb millions, who can turn the tide of events, need freedom from want. They need the most minimum amenities to guarantee them a human existence. They need protection against the high-handedness and arbitrariness of the employers. They need protection against the innumerable other forms of hardships and privations

which fill their daily life. These are matters of elementary justice. Yet, they cannot be made available to the great bulk of the people unless encroachments are made upon what is believed to be the preserves and privileges of the fortunate few. Most probably, if the Government took up a firm attitude, the latter, who have so far prospered under official protection, would give in. But suppose they don't, and it becomes necessary for the Government to act against their will, there would be no risk, because the risk of alienating the support of ten per cent of the people will guarantee to the Government the support of the ninety per cent. Moreover, the support of the two per cent is already dubious. Some of them are actually financing and otherwise organising the open revolt against the Government. And all of them having vested interest in the established order, which will inevitably be disturbed if this war ends in a defeat of Fascism, are naturally incipient allies of the Axis Powers. Therefore, in making the choice, which must be made if the Government of India is to escape the doom, it does not really lose anything. It will only lose the chain of association with people who spiritually and historically belong to the enemy camp. It is a veritable case of losing only your chains, while there is a whole world to gain.

But the prejudice of impartiality persuades the Government to remain in the chain voluntarily. Believing that its duty is to protect all and sundry, it refuses to do anything which might mean an encroachment upon the legal rights of the reactionary upper classes. But a legal right is not always moral. A right which enables people to promote cooter revolution and impede the progress of mankind, is certainly immoral.

The theory of impartiality of a Government was always a fiction. To-day it can be practised only as a pretext for helping counter-revolution. Perhaps, ordinarily, those who still hold the destinies of this country in their hand, would consider it their duty to protect and promote the forces of counter-revolution. Because, while engaged in a revolutionary war, they still talk of revolution as a nightmare. But now they give the name of revolution to counter-revolution! Whatever terminology they use, as a matter of habit, they are in the camp of revolution in this international civil war.

Now the civil war has spread to India. Here also, the camps must be differentiated. And the Government of the country must be in the camp of revolution if the anti-Fascist war is to be waged successfully also on the Indian front. There is no time to lose. Events are moving fast. Therefore, there should be no further delay in making the choice.

October 11, 1942

In anticipation of last week's India debate in the British Parliament, various press organs and some public bodies in Britain made suggestions regarding measures and methods which should be adopted for coping with the situation in the country. There was unanimity on the proposition that, subject to the limitations imposed by the exigencies of military operations, political power should be transferred to Indians. It was generally assumed that the establishment of a Government composed exclusively of Indians would release India's war potentials to the fullest extent. The formalistic approach to the problem completely ignored the fundamental question of policy. Consequently, it was possible for Mr. Amery to evade all the real issues of the Indian situation, and depict the latter in a pinkish, if not quite rosy colour, and speak in a tone of short sighted optimism as if everything was as it should be. While people calling themselves Liberals, Democrats, Socialists and even Communists, could not think of any other solution than a mere racial change, how could a mid Victorian mentality think of India except as a conglomeration of feudal princes and religious communities? Between the two, the Indian question is completely bedevilled and discussed in an atmosphere of unreality and make belief. Such a discussion naturally can never be fruitful.

In order to make a desperate effort to present the Indian problem in its proper setting and a clear perspective, the General Secretary of the Radical Democratic Party, on the eve of the India debate, called a statement to

the British press. The Indian press being monopolised by one party and the news agencies controlled by vested interests, the voice of Indian democracy seldom reaches Britain. Therefore, the Indian problem appears so very baffling even to those British statesmen who are earnestly and honestly searching for a practical approach to it.

In his statement cabled to the British press, the General Secretary of the Radical Democratic Party wrote : " What India needs is a Democratic Government. A Government composed of Indians belonging to the major political parties would not necessarily be a Democratic Government. The Indian major political parties are all controlled by the upper classes which constitute hardly ten per cent. of the nation. The fullest release of the nation's war potentials requires enthusiastic co-operation of the masses who will be virtually unrepresented on a formally democratic National Government. Therefore, the question of policy should precede the question of the personal composition of the Government. "

Having made these general observations, and outlined the relation of forces in the political life of contemporary India, the statement suggested the policy of democratic practice which alone could help the solution of the Indian problem, both regarding the intensification of war efforts as well as the framing of a Constitution acceptable to all the popular elements. " Measures must be taken to make the masses feel that it is worthwhile to undergo hardships and make sacrifices. They must be given something to defend. But that cannot be done without encroaching upon vested interests. The defence of this country ultimately depends upon the attitude of the peasantry. Give them land, and they will constitute a line of resistance as thick as the whole country. If the present atmosphere

of popular apathy and discontent is to be transformed into a will to resist, then there must be an end to war-time profiteering which creates artificial scarcity and forces prices up, real wages must be increased counter-balancing the rise in the cost of living, and legal protection must be given to industrial workers against arbitrary treatment on the pretext of war emergency. Such a policy of democratic practice alone will enable a government to cope with the situation. Only change of personnel won't do. Democratic practice is more important than a mere formality. Indian democracy is outside the major parties. It should be given the opportunity to assert itself. That is the only solution to the problem. A government controlled by Indian vested interests cannot be expected to find that solution. Power must be transferred to the Indian people. The National Government must be composed only of those who are clearly committed to the policy of democratic practice outlined above."

Significantly enough, a statement suggesting concrete measures calculated to promote the welfare of the people as well as to create an atmosphere suitable for greater war efforts, did not find any place in the press of the country, which has been clamouring so much against the restriction of the freedom of helping the dark forces waging a war against the people. The advocates of a National Government, with or without the Congress, but in any case only with the "principal" political parties, have studiously omitted saying a single word about what their government would do, if it was constituted. If it was a matter of simple thoughtlessness, then the rectification of their omission by the formulation of a policy of democratic practice should be welcome. But

evidently the fundamental question of policy is deliberately ignored.

An equally superficial and reactionary view of the problem is taken by Mr. Amery. If the views he expressed in his speech are shared by the British Government, then even greater misfortunes are in store for India, and also for the United Nations. The Indian question can no longer be treated by itself. It is to be treated in the context of the international front against the Axis Powers. Having failed to appease the Congress, whose Petainist tendency can be denied only by foolish friends of Indian freedom, the British Government, in so far as its views are represented by Mr. Amery, seems to have fallen back on a broken reed.

It may be very risky to point out the grave danger involved in the position taken up by Mr. Amery. But however great, that risk must be taken by those who are anxious to see that the Indian sector of the anti-Fascist world front is not further weakened by the inability to realise that a revolutionary war cannot be waged by reactionary and conservative forces. Yet, Mr. Amery proposes to do exactly that. What is still worse, is that he counts upon imaginary assets in India, the dubious nature of which has already been exposed in practice. He expressed the view that "the fate of the Allied cause and the whole safety of India largely depend upon the army, the police and the Civil Service." Nobody would dispute the relative importance of these factors. But it is nothing short of suicidal to believe that India can be defended by them without any popular co-operation. As if, except those who are acting as the Fifth Column of the Axis Powers, there is no other popular force in this country ! The truth, however, is

that the really popular forces cannot be fitted into the scheme of the *status quo* which Mr Amery seems to be very anxious to retain at least in this country even if it can no longer be done at his own home. If that short sighted attitude was only unfair to India, there would be nothing more to say about it because we do not believe that Indian freedom would ever come as a gift of anybody. But the die hard attitude of Mr Amery endangers the cause of the United Nations including that of the British Democracy. If the Indian situation is handled according to his views then the defence of this country will be a matter of grave doubt and consequently the security of the world anti-Fascist front will be impaired.

Evidently, Mr Amery is very inadequately acquainted with what recently happened and is still happening in this country. It is very similar to what happened for instance in Germany during the year preceding Hitler's advent to power. We are experiencing in this country organised sabotage mass terror and hooliganism which marked the march of triumphant Fascism to Germany. The most striking feature of the situation in that critical period was the attitude of a large section of the State officials of the armed forces and particularly of the police. The attitude was not only of toleration for, and connivance with, the Fascists rising up in an open revolt against the established Government but of actual assistance. A similar feature can be noticed also in the present Indian situation. The Government may try to overlook this alarming feature either for prestige or for some other unknown reasons. But it will do so only at its own cost. The dangerous fact of the situation is that the State machinery is manned by people not a few of whom are hostile to the Government. In view of this

note of that fact and doing the needful, the Government prefers to lean on that broken reed of imaginary loyalty rather than reach out for sincere friends and powerful allies from among the popular masses outside the charmed circle of respectability and principal political parties.

The complacency of short-sighted and ill-informed British statesmen like Mr. Amery never tires of taking pride in the fact that the Indian army is receiving seventy thousand new recruits per month, and that the Indian Princes who rule over one third of the Indian population, stand firm in their loyalty. The latter may not be "negligible excrescences", but they certainly cannot constitute "a sound foundation" for a really democratic State in India. And as regards the large number of recruits to the Indian Army, is it not counter-balanced by the amazingly large number of "missing" in the casualty lists?

No, the time is too dangerous, and the problem is too complicated to go by mere appearances, or to find consolation in old notions of loyalty which has absolutely no meaning in the context of the present relation of forces. The loyalty that counts to-day is the loyalty for an idea and the attraction for an ideal. The idea is that of modern human freedom, and the ideal is that of a new world. These ideas and ideals naturally cannot have any appeal either for the martial classes or for the Princes who still live in an atmosphere of mediaevalism and swear loyalty to the British Crown because it is good business; because it may offer protection to their dying world against the onrush of a revolution which must sweep the whole world if it is not to come under the iron heels of triumphant Fascism.

But the idea of revolution still remains a bogey for men like Mr Amery. So very blinding is the prejudice, fortified by fright, that they cannot distinguish revolution from counter revolution. Mr Amery laid the entire responsibility of the present war against the Indian people on the Congress. Yet, he characterised the Congress as "a party of revolution"! He went even farther, and called Hitler a revolutionary whom he compared with Gandhi. Both are called "revolutionary leaders", because their appeals either "to the German passion, to brute force or to the mysticism of Hindu rhetorics" produce the "same type of dictatorship".

If Hitler is a revolutionary leader, then Fascism is a revolutionary ideology, that is to say, progressive and liberating, and the Axis Powers are instruments thereof. Where does Mr Amery then find himself? In the camp of the counter revolution, amongst the enemies of freedom and progress. But fortunately, if not for himself, at least for the world, he happens to be in the opposite camp. Perhaps he feels very uncomfortable there. But it is fate. And there is no use struggling against it.

Nothing would justify the present policy of the British Government in dealing with the Congress, unless the latter was a counter revolutionary organisation, or at least its activities objectively helped the cause of counter-revolution. By disowning that justification, Mr Amery damages the case of his own Government. He would be well advised to think over the matter seriously and carefully, before he speaks about India next time. Because every time he speaks, he does injustice to the British people, damages the cause of the United Nations, and maligns his own Government. And as long as he would keep on thoughtlessly talking of suppressing

revolution in India, the ill-informed British friends of Indian freedom would be driven to support Indian Fascism.

Major Attlee's concluding speech was the redeeming feature of the debate. It was an effort to atone for Mr. Amery's sins of omission and commission. We do not know if the statement of the General Secretary of the Radical Democratic Party was available to the Deputy Premier before he made his speech. But we are glad to note that his approach to the Indian problem was very much on the line indicated in that statement. If he had formed his views independently, that is all the more encouraging. That corroborates our view that a revolution is taking place also in England, and the days of men like Mr. Amery are counted. Fully supporting the proposition that power must be transferred to Indians, Major Attlee said : "Democracy does not mean dominance of the whole people by one section. The demand of India to-day is not just to be governed by Indians. We want Democratic Government for India. Presumably, we could, if we wished, settle the Indian question by handing it over to some Indians or one Indian. But our Constitution depends not on the form of democracy; we are used to practising democracy." As the corollary to those observations, the Deputy Prime Minister added : "The only people who can defend India at the present moment, are the peoples of the Allied Nations and the people of India themselves."

That is a perspective entirely different from that of Mr. Amery. The latter believes that the Government could do without the people, whereas Mr. Attlee holds that it is meaningless to talk about democracy, leaving the people out of account. . If Mr. Attlee would press his.

view, the Indian problem will cease to be baffling for the British Government. What is necessary is a closer contact between the peoples of the two countries. Vested interests in both the countries are standing in the way. Measures suggested by us would curb the power of the reactionary elements who, by their very nature, are bound to be in the camp of the enemy, and thus make it easier for the Indian people to come closer to their British comrades. On the basis of a closer relation between the two, it will not be at all difficult to solve all the outstanding problems of the Indian situation.

That seems to be the view also of Major Attlee. Replying to the ill informed and misguided enthusiasts who believed that appeasement of Indian Petaism was the only road to Indian freedom, the Deputy Premier said. "If you suggest that we can enter into negotiations with people who are running a campaign of this sort, you are betraying the future of Indian democracy." That point must be driven home, so that harm is not done to India by those who wish to help her. The danger involved in the practice of insisting upon formal democracy was even greater than the betrayal of the future of Indian Democracy. There has been a good deal of hush-hush in this connection. British statesmen have been reluctant to speak out. On the contrary, they have been studiously creating the impression that they would deal with the Congress at the earliest available opportunity. Perhaps the object was to calm the opposition. But it has not been a wise policy. Because it has not only confused people's minds, but encouraged in India those who are waging a war against the people. One passage in Mr. Attlee's speech may put an end to all speculation, because it reveals the reason for the British Government

not to enter into negotiations with the object of putting Congressmen in power. He said : "To allow India to fall out, would be to betray the people who have been fighting in China, and not only them, but the people of Russia as well."

The truth is out at last. Let it determine the approach to the Indian problem. This truth precludes a superficial solution on the basis of the mere formality of establishing a National Government. Because, such a formality will not only not promote democracy in India, but will endanger the entire democratic cause throughout the world. There is the danger of a formally democratic National Government "falling out" of the war. In view of that danger, there cannot be any doubt what is to be done. And that is the road of democratic practice. Some British statesmen, here as well as in Britain, may not as yet be prepared to travel the only way not only to the salvation of India, but to the victory of the United Nations. Therefore, they may advocate the practice of mere formality. But if history is not to suffer a serious setback, they will have to yield place to others, who would neither be blinded by the prejudices of a reactionary Nationalism, nor be hidebound by antiquated notions associated with a passing Imperialism.

October 18, 1942.

## VI

If this war is not to be fought in vain, only to end in another armistice, to break out again with even greater fury of destruction, then, some fundamental issues of social relation must be settled. They are old issues, raised already at the dawn of civilisation. Yet, even to day they present themselves clearly in the minds of only a few, and consequently any settlement presupposes their being made acquainted to those guiding the destinies of the world, and their appreciation. In other words, the task really is to raise those old fundamental issues of human relations on the social and political plane, so that their importance may be fully realised and that realisation on the part of a sufficiently large number of people lead to the desired settlement.

This war is said to be fought for freedom and democracy. But even for leaders of the United Nations they do not seem to be anything more than vague conceptions. Indeed, with many they are only attractive slogans which may serve the purpose of the moment. It is not suggested that there is any hypocrisy or a deliberate will to deceive. It is rather a matter of superficiality,—an intellectual inadequacy. The last war was also fought with the slogan of democracy. But it certainly did not make the world safe for democracy. On the contrary, the armistice which concluded the conflict created conditions which made the world very insecure for democracy and were very favourable for the rise of Fascism, the avowed foe of democracy. Again, let it be repeated that there was no conscious

hypocrisy or intellectual dishonesty. Only, the issues were not properly grasped and action was not planned accordingly. It should have been clear to the meanest intelligence that an alliance which made room for Tzarist absolutism could hardly be expected to make the world safe for democracy. The last world war was fought between two alliances equally opportunistic and promiscuous. Consequently, the issues involved could not be clearly defined, and the war was bound to end in a precarious peace treaty.

In order to spare humanity another experience like that, it is necessary to put some concrete contents into the ideals of freedom and democracy. At present, so vague are the concepts, so loose is the thinking in that connection, whenever any thinking at all is done, that freedom and democracy are usually believed to be only two names for the same thing. Undoubtedly, they are inter-related concepts. The realisation of one of the ideals may be conditional upon the realisation of the other. But it is realised by very few that that is not necessarily so. Human freedom, in the broadest possible sense, will certainly coincide with a truly democratic State. But what is now known as democratic institutions, do not necessarily establish freedom. That is a matter of practice. Whoever are seriously working for the attainment of those fashionable ideals, must have the courage and intellectual honesty to draw that unpleasant conclusion from the experience of the contemporary world.

Democracy is conceived as a purely political relation. It is an institutional conception. It is assumed that freedom will follow automatically upon the establishment of certain formal rights and some administrative institutions. And freedom is conceived only as a political

status. Consequently, freedom and democracy have come to be synonymous terms. If the relation between the two old human ideals was so simple, then there should be no reason for the world to be thrown into the present calamity.

The object of the last world war was *formally* attained. Formally democratic governments were established practically in all the important countries of the world. In Germany, the feudal militarist regime was replaced by a republic under which formal democracy went almost to the farthest limits. Nevertheless, it was in Germany that Fascism was born. It is absurd to trace the cause of this puzzling phenomenon to the character of the German people or even to Prussian militarism. The real cause was inadequacy of formal democracy. The freedom of the German people required certain changes in social relations, which did not necessarily follow from the establishment of political democracy. In other words, democracy did not guarantee freedom. Consequently, democracy was discredited, and the urge for freedom could be canalised by its enemies to exactly the contrary direction. The result was Fascism.

If the inadequacies of formal political democracy were not flagrant, if it did not fail signally to solve acute social problems then Fascism could not secure the mass support adequate for its success in its crusade against democracy. Even in the countries where Fascism did not appear, or could not gather sufficient strength, formal political democracy was not free from its inadequacies. The test is the standard of freedom attained. Formal democracy in no country can stand that test.

This is not a negation of democracy. It is what is called constructive criticism. Formal democracy should

not set a limit to human freedom. It should be appreciated only as a means for the attainment of freedom. It can ultimately coincide with human freedom in the broadest sense if it is expanded to govern all the departments of human life. If it is institutionalised, that is to say, if democratic government is identified with some formal practices, then democracy may even become a negation of freedom. That danger may overtake India in the near future. Even to-day, democratic formality allows the subordination of the Indian people to the ignorance of the enfranchised minority and to the machinations and selfishness of those who possess the means to sway that minority, glorified as the electorate. Therefore, for the sake of freedom, indeed even of formal democracy, a simple question must be raised : Who should have precedence, the people or the electorate which is a small minority of the people ? Why should the electorate, simply because it is privileged to be enfranchised, be entitled to make or mar the destiny of the entire people ? The question is answered by raising it. And that answer throws an entirely new light on the Indian situation. Under the given circumstances in this country, freedom and formal democracy have absolutely no connection. Therefore, one must raise yet another question : What does India want ? Freedom or formal democracy ? The question may be put in a different way : What shall decide the approach to the Indian problem, the welfare of the people or the artfully voiced opinion of the electorate ? Formal democracy places a premium on the latter. By doing so, it runs counter to the ideal of freedom.

To adjust the relation between freedom and democracy is an old problem. Indeed, it is as old as the

beginning of political thought. The first attempt to solve the problem was made by Plato. And his solution substantially can guide not only political thinking, but even political practice of our time. Democracy is the original form of government. Therefore, the development of democracy attracted the attention of ancient political thinkers. Conceiving the State as the political organisation of society, Plato came to the conclusion that the function of the 'state' was to secure good life for the citizens. The term 'good life' meant fullest development of the individual, that is to say, freedom in all the departments of human life. Having thus stated the fundamental problem of social relations, Plato set to himself the task of framing the Constitution of the Ideal State. Plato's 'Republic' is a thoroughly democratic institution. The only discordant note is the idea of 'guardians'. That apparent contradiction in Plato's ideal Constitution resulted from the contradiction between human freedom and formal democracy. The practice of democracy, as a means for the attainment of freedom presupposes an educated citizenship. An uneducated mass can be easily swayed by demagogues. Therefore formal democracy, based on a credulous electorate, is more likely to reinforce the privileged minority than to broaden the bounds of freedom for the people as a whole. All these considerations led Plato to the idea of guardians. Apparently, the idea favours dictatorship. But Plato was not discussing forms or institutions. He was concerned with contents. His eyes were fixed on the ideal of human freedom, for the attainment of which he was devising means. This is very clear from what he actually wrote in this connection. "Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of the world have the spirit and

power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those numerous natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other, are forcibly restrained from doing so, cities will never have rest from their evils—no, nor the human race as I believe,—and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day."

Plato's views were misunderstood and utilised for base motives, because his description of the philosopher is not borne in mind. The philosopher is one who does not lay claim to any title. Plato came to the conclusion that freedom could be attained in a State under the guardianship of philosophers, because they alone are free from the temptation of private interest, and can therefore devote themselves to the single-minded pursuit of the public good. Plato's Constitution contained devices in order to place the "guardians" above all temptation.

This may be dismissed as all too theoretical or idealistic. But that can be done only by those who do not seriously apply themselves to the fundamental problem of human relations, and therefore reduce freedom and democracy to empty concepts.

Plato was ages ahead of his time. He was really visualising an ideal political organisation of society. That ideal is not yet attained. The world has only recently emerged from the long age of darkness, during which mankind strayed away from the ancient idea of democracy. The State, of course, developed as the political organisation of society; but the ideal of freedom was completely lost. Ultimately, the threads of Plato's political thought were taken up by Karl Marx. He replaced the Platonic idea of guardians with that of the dictatorship of a class. In course of time, it became clear

that the dictatorship could not be exercised by a whole class, but by its best product—the modern version of Plato's philosopher. Whether the theoretical and practical exponents of proletarian dictatorship, as a means to the end of human freedom and real democracy can measure up to the standard set by Plato, is a question which should not influence the discussion of the old problem of the relation between democracy and freedom. The problem has been complicated in our time by making an end out of the means. The institutional conception of formal democracy is believed to be the end of political development. The more fundamental concept of freedom must be distorted in order to be fitted into circumstances, under which it may not be able to exist at all. Perhaps, it was unfortunate to choose the term dictatorship, which is certainly offensive. It was more unfortunate to lay so much emphasis on it. But the idea conceived by two great political thinkers, who lived in two different ages, lays bare the nature of the relation between the concepts of freedom and democracy. Both of them discarded formal democracy as inadequate for the attainment of human freedom. For both, politics was the science of social administration. Both attached greater importance to the disinterested concern for general welfare than to formal rights. Both realised that true democracy could not be established except on the foundation of an educated electorate, and therefore both came to the conclusion that proper education of citizens was the condition for their freedom, and that the task of imparting that education must necessarily fall on the shoulders of a minority.

Plato thought that the minority constituting the properly qualified leadership of society could be artificially

created. Greater human experience and more developed knowledge enabled Marx to visualise a similar minority being thrown up in course of social evolution. The temptations of the "guardians" are not to be removed by special regulations. The minority belongs to a social class which could not be freed without abolishing all class interest and privileges. Plato was not a mere visionary. History has borne him out. If democracy is going to be a means for the attainment of human freedom, it must be practised as Plato visualised in broad outlines. The details of the practice have been filled in by Marx, who had naturally to adjust his ideas to the conditions of his time.

But there was a break in the line of the development of political ideas from Plato to Marx. That was the origin of the so-called modern democratic ideas, which have suffered a ship-wreck. It was a departure from the original idea of democracy. The departure began with Locke who regarded society as an atomic structure, so to say, instead of the ancient conception of a whole. Locke freed the State from all responsibility regarding the training of the citizen for the attainment of the ideal of good life. The moral upbringing of the citizens is left completely out of the purview of modern democracy. Democracy thus became a purely political concept, and instead of subordinating sectional interests to the ideal of general freedom and welfare, it became an instrument for the defence of a stratified society.

Once vested interest is believed to be a permanent institution, if not actually sacrosanct, Fascism becomes inevitable. Because, Fascism is a reversion to the mediaeval ideas of inherent social inequality and of supermen.

Therefore, for the realisation of the ideal of democracy and for the establishment of human freedom, the modern world will have to go back to the ideas of Plato, developed in our time by Karl Marx.

The confusion regarding the relation between freedom and democracy is causing incalculable harm to this country. The establishment of formal democracy is the common demand of all the advocates of Indian freedom who labour under the delusion that freedom automatically results from the establishment of some political institutions. Formal democracy in this country, under the present circumstances, will be the rule of a minority. And real power will be in the possession of a minority even smaller than the present electorate. The social composition of that smaller minority is evident. They are certainly not composed of philosophers who can act as guardians of a democratic State. Nor do they belong to a class which, because of itself being destitute of all vested interest, conceives freedom as the disappearance of all privileges. Yet, even those who do not approach the problem of Indian freedom from the sentimental point of view of the reformer or humanitarian, cannot think of any solution of the problem of introducing democratic government in this country except on the basis of a settlement with those who, by their very nature, cannot possibly introduce democratic freedom.

If this fundamental contradiction of the present Indian situation is not fully appreciated, then as far as India is concerned, the war against Fascism may end in a peace with Fascism. If no settlement with the parties backed by the electorate is possible during the war, the door will be kept open for them. That means, after the war the government of the country will be handed over

to them. Apart from their position in the Indian society, their record during the war shows how little they care for democracy and human freedom. Yet, the Indian people will be handed over to their tender mercies, unless under the impact of the war, more realistic thinking overwhelm the formalistic approach to the problem of freedom and democracy.

October 25, 1942

## VI

There has been too much talk about the Indian deadlock. It has all been a talk for no purpose. Of course, the situation in the country is not as it should be, particularly in this critical time. The Government remains isolated from the people, and the people are not mobilised for the maximum war effort. There is absence of any great enthusiasm and there is a general feeling of frustration. But all that is not the result of one particular political party choosing to play the dog in the manger. The dog could be whipped out of the manger, if there was an earnest desire to feed the horse. It is absurd to tolerate the dog in the manger, and at the same time complain that it is interfering with the proper feeding of other animals. The real cause of the present regrettable and indeed dangerous, situation in the country is the fact that the dog is treated with so much toleration. The so called deadlock results from that remarkable tolerance, which means not only a callous disregard for, but a flagrant violation of the Indian democracy. Yet, curiously enough, all this talk about the Indian deadlock is said to be prompted by the concern for the rights of Indian democracy.

Some may be talking through the hat, they may not really want a termination of the deadlock, because they prefer the present position. But others, whose sincerity is not questioned, have not been able to do much, because there is really no deadlock, which they are so very anxious to end. They are prescribing for an imaginary disease. The co-operation of any one particular party is-

not an essential condition for the transfer of power to the Indian people. Nor is it democratic to insist that the Indian people would not be liberated unless power is handed over to one particular political party. This unreasonable insistence from both the sides, which do not agree about the termination of the so-called Indian deadlock, is adding a semblance of reality to that imaginary difficulty.

There is a deadlock to the extent that the regrettable gulf between the Government and the people cannot be bridged by reconstructing the former strictly within the limits of the letters of a Constitution which has been scrapped, for all practical purposes. It may not be possible to devise a more suitable Constitution in the midst of the war. But workable Constitutions are more likely to grow out of practice. The breakdown of a Constitution, written laboriously in the rarified atmosphere of London, only makes room for realistic democratic practice, which may give birth to a more workable Constitution. If this practical view of the situation is taken, all talk about the deadlock becomes superfluous and meaningless.

A group of politicians has gone on strike. Should they be allowed to paralyse the political life of the whole country? They may be patriotic men,—all good and true. But is there any reason to believe that patriotism is their monopoly? There are others with long records of patriotic service. Is it not possible to constitute a National Government with such men? Will such a National Government be any less democratic? The contention that no Indian Government without the co-operation, if not actually under the control, of the Congress will be a National Government cannot be maintained even from the point of view of formal democracy,

that is, counting of heads. The electorate is hardly thirty per cent of the people. A majority of that electorate, therefore, is only a small fraction of the Indian democracy. It is not democracy to allow that small privileged minority to keep the Government of the country isolated from the vast majority of the people. Yet, the so called deadlock results only from the recognition of that dictatorial right of the privileged minority.

Anyhow, the Constitution having broken down, and been scrapped for all practical purposes, an election held under it, in entirely different circumstances, cannot have any bearing on the present situation. Nor will a new election under the defunct Constitution be a democratic practice. Because, the result of that new election will not reflect the opinion of the majority of the Indian people. Is it not, then, obvious that the formation of a popular Government to deal with the war situation need not be prevented by difficulties resulting from the breakdown of an unworkable Constitution? The only difficulty is regarding the choice of right men. The convenient and often misleading method of counting heads being not available, those responsible for the present and future of India must fall back on their own judgment. If they had the courage to look beyond the narrow circle of respectability, they will find in common sense a much better guarantee for democracy than in any formal Constitution.

India remains in her present perilous position not because of any constitutional deadlock. The evil results rather from a spiritual wedlock. The destiny of India still remains in the lap of demi-gods who would rather be in hell in a respectable company than go to heaven.

with the help of the unwashed multitude. Similar conservatism and snobbishness have been the ruin of many who failed to march with time. Only, they often drag others down in the ruin which they themselves may well deserve. The most strenuous efforts, therefore, must be made to spare India that tragic fate. Hence the necessity for exposing the sinister conspiracy or illicit love which underlie all this talk about the Indian deadlock. The rulers of this country seem to be tormented by a conflict of emotions. Physically, they find themselves in one camp. But spiritually, they still remain in another. It is a well known fact that until recently many of them had great fascination for Fascism. Some of them may have survived that infatuation, in so far as its object was some supermen either in Germany or Italy, and their "great achievements". But the company they still cultivate here in India is spiritually Fascist.

There is no deadlock in the political life of India. But there is a stagnation. The forces of Indian democracy are not given the opportunity to assert themselves on the situation. Those who are honestly anxious for a maximum mobilisation of India's popular energy in support of the United Nations, have failed to do so because they would not face up with the reality of the Indian situation. It is a civil war, which has broken out during the last months after a longer period of preparation. This civil war is a part of the world-wide conflict between the dark forces of reaction marshalled under the bloody banner of Fascism, and those of freedom and progress. Instead of being in a deadlock, which means inactivity, India to-day is the scene of a fierce conflict between the forces of reaction and of liberation. The Government of the country cannot remain neutral. The

plan of forming a National War Front by uniting the sheep with the goats, is absurd. In order to be a reality, a sector of the world war front against Fascism, the National War Front must be the front between the two camps of the Indian civil war. Being engaged in a war against the Axis Powers, the Government of India must be a party to the Indian civil war. It must declare war upon the forces of reaction in this country. Once it takes up that position, which it must if it would not betray the cause of the United Nations, it will no longer be baffled by the imaginary deadlock. Because, the constitutional deadlock is created by the obstructive attitude of politicians who belong to the camp of reaction in the Indian civil war. The Government, on the other hand, is on the side of the people, which was disregarded by the Constitution. Therefore, no constitutional formalities can stand in the way of a closer relation between the people and the Government. And a truly democratic Government can easily be established on the basis of that relation.

But the very forces of Indian reaction, which are spiritually allied with the enemies of the United Nations, were all along the allies of the Government of India, and that was not an alliance for convenience. The relation was closer. Therefore, it still subsists, though somewhat strained under the impact of world events. The deadlock is a figment of the imagination of those who are anxious to retain that relation, and also of those who believe that, except on the basis of that relation, no democratic government can be established in India. Both are equally wrong. The imaginary deadlock represents a crisis in the relation which has become harmful. The happy family must be broken up. Maintenance of an

illicit relation even after a formal divorce will only complicate the situation. That is exactly what is happening. The rulers of India have been driven to the painful realisation that their old love must be given up. But, at the same time, it is not easy to do so. That is the conflict of emotion which is preventing them from doing what they must do for their own safety, if not for any other purpose.

Otherwise, how to explain the reluctance to give up the hope of appeasing the Congress even after it has declared open revolt? This reluctance is justified with the argument that the Congress commands popular support. There is more than one fallacy to that argument. One fallacy is that of the insistence on constitutional formalities, even under a Constitution which has been scrapped in practice. The second fallacy is that, on the token of the result of the last election, the Congress does not represent more than a small minority of the Indian people. The third fallacy is to ignore how the Congress commands the apparent popular support. We have time and again written extensively on these fallacies. It is not necessary to repeat again.

The corollary to the anxiety for ending an imaginary deadlock is the repeated assurance that the door is kept open for those who have created the deadlock. What does frequent talk about keeping the door open mean? It is an offer of peace with those who have declared war. And by declaring the war, they have placed themselves on the other side of the barricade. Perhaps one may argue that it does not mean peace during the war. Is it not absurd to think of making peace with Fascism at home after winning the war against Fascism abroad? Yet, the anxiety to keep the door open for the present

the entire people in this war against Fascism, foreign as well as native?

The love, evidently, is not for this or that party. It is for conservatism and respectability. And these two virtues together make for reaction. Because, the forces of progress are naturally disruptive. They are bound to transgress the limits set by the *status quo*. Therefore, conservatism and progress are mutually exclusive. And whatever is opposed to progress is called reaction. Respectability also is measured by conventional standards, which are set up by the ethics of the established order of things. Therefore, conventional respectability may not always conform with progressive ideas.

These prejudices in higher quarters are keeping India in her present perilous position. It is natural for prejudices to die hard. But they must die if democracy is not to be betrayed. Fortunately, there are people in higher quarters who realise that prejudices are preventing right action. Because they have been able to inhale the spirit of our time and realise the problems of the moment, their responsibility is all the greater. They should not be tolerant with those, with whom prejudices die very slowly, simply because they are in love with those prejudices, and therefore do not want to break away from them.

November 1, 1942

## VII

As the pioneer and spearhead of the anti-Fascist movement in this country, we share the general relief given by the improved military position of the United Nations. It may be the beginning of the end of Hitlerism. A more cautious view would be that the fall of Hitler may be expected sooner than anticipated. That by itself would certainly be welcome. But that would hardly be the victory for which the progressive and truly democratic people throughout the world desired the triumph of the arms of the United Nations. Particularly for India, such a victory may indeed be a calamity. Because, the civil war between the forces of reaction and real freedom will not be fought out, and victory will most probably place the former in power. Therefore, while rejoicing at the recent success of the Anglo-American Powers, their allies in India cannot help having serious misgivings about the fate of this country.

If the initiative taken in North Africa can be retained, the military situation will become definitely favourable for the United Nations. In that case, India will be out of the danger of a Fascist invasion. But she will by no means be out of the danger of Fascism. As a matter of fact, that favourable turn of the international situation may prove to be more advantageous for Indian Fascism, which has just suffered a partial defeat in a rather premature offensive. India is threatened by the danger of Fascism growing inside the country as well as coming from outside in the form of the threatened Axis invasion. Practically every country is similarly

threatened from two sides. Therefore, this war has been characterised as an international civil war, and all those who desired that this war should be fought to the finish attached great importance to winning the battles on the home front. In the case of India, the danger to the home front is greater, because it is very vulnerable. We have always insisted that, as far as India is concerned the decisive battles of this war against Fascism must be fought on the home front. The welcome turn in the military situation may induce the present rulers of India not only to be indifferent to the danger on the home front, but actually help Indian Fascism win the battle on that decisive front.

As far as her relation with Britain is concerned, India's future is settled. The right of self determination has been fully conceded to her. There are very few Englishmen even among the officials in this country who believe that the old relation between the two countries could be retained after this war. As far as the bulk of the politically minded people in Britain and America are concerned India becoming free after this war is a foregone conclusion. Responsible British statesmen have time and again reaffirmed the far reaching offer with which Sir Stafford Cripps was sent out to this country by the War Cabinet. The offer was rejected by the bargaining politicians to whom it was made not foolishly as it appeared to be, but deliberately with a sinister motive. The motive is not unknown to the British Government either in this country or in England. Nor could the American Government or any other member of the anti-Axis alliance possibly be ignorant of it. However, for some mysterious reason, British statesmen have all along been rather reluctant to speak frankly about it.

Consequently, they have placed themselves in a position which appears to be false. Their weakness, which results from an illicit love, so to say, has been exploited by their opponents. Nevertheless, the truth about the cause of the failure of the Cripps Mission is now an open secret.

It was given out by no less a person than the Deputy Prime Minister during the India Debate in the House of Commons in the earlier part of October. On that occasion, Mr. Attlee said: "We have responsibility to the Indian people to prevent them from falling under Japan. We have our responsibility to our Allies—our Allies who have put up such a wonderful fight in China. It is through India that we shall be able to help China. To allow India to fall out of the war, would be to betray the people who have been fighting China, and not only them, but the people of Russia as well."

The contention of the Indian nationalists and their supporters abroad is that only a Government controlled by them can defend India against foreign invasion. The British Government evidently dispute that contention. Otherwise, there would be no point in Mr. Attlee's remark that it was the responsibility of the British Government to prevent the Indian people from falling under Japan. It has been made clear by the Indian nationalist leaders that transfer of political power to them would not affect the position of the Anglo-American military forces in this country. That being the case, Britain's responsibility for defending India militarily could be discharged even if the nationalist demand was forthwith conceded. What, then, is the reason for not handing over power to the Indian nationalists immediately, since it has been definitely decided to do so after the war? Presumably, the British Government have reason to

believe that, in control of the Government of the country, Indian nationalists may prejudice the defence of the country Since, by common consent, the Anglo American military forces will remain autonomous during the war, the doubt could not be regarding the ability of a new Government to discharge the responsibility of conducting military affairs The nature of the doubt was made explicit by Mr. Attlee himself later on in his speech There was the danger of nationalist India "falling out of the war" Anglo American armed forces could not shoulder the responsibility of defending India militarily when the country would be under a Government which might be inclined towards readjusting its international relations In other words, the danger which prevented the British Government to do immediately what it has decided to do namely, to transfer power to the Indians, was the danger of Petainism And Petainism is only a veiled form of Fascism

There is no reason to believe that India is out of the danger, or she will be, even if Indian Petainists will follow the noble example of their French prototypes presently on account of the change in the military situation on the international front The reluctance of the British statesmen to call a spade a spade, and take up the challenge on the Indian home front with the object of fighting the enemy "inside our gates" to the finish, may yet lead to a peace with this latter, which will mean delivering India to the tender mercies of native Fascism, even when a victory over the Axis Powers is in sight, or at any rate after that victory has been won

The ominous development prejudicing the fate of India has just been heralded by an Indian occupying a high position in the governmental hierarchy Speaking

at San Francisco, Dewan Bahadur S. S. Ranganadhan, Adviser to the Secretary of State for India, said : "Allied success in the Mediterranean will go far to relieve the difficulties between British and Indian leaders." By way of explaining his optimism, he added : "Indians have lacked confidence in the Allies' ability to cope with the Axis, and hence hesitated to cast their lot with what might be a losing cause. The spirit of defeatism amongst the Indian leaders was an important factor in the failure of the Cripps Mission."

That is cutting the t's and dotting the i's of Mr. Attlee's speech referred to above. The real motive of the Indian nationalist leaders' rejecting the Cripps offer was not to be in the bad books of the Axis Powers when the chances for the United Nations winning the war did not appear to be very bright. If at that juncture they found themselves in a position of power, and if the situation was further aggravated by a Japanese invasion of India, it would be only too natural for them not to have any scruple in deserting the sinking ship and hitch their fortunes to the rising star which would be the Rising Sun from the Far East. Is it not really remarkable that the British Government, even in the critical days, repeatedly declared that the doors to the palace of power remained open for those very Indian leaders to walk in whenever they pleased ? And now actually it is hoped that they would do so before long ! The future of India, therefore, looks dark indeed, even when the chances of the United Nations winning the war are getting decidedly brighter. And the one will be darker in proportion as the other will go brighter.

The Indian nationalist leaders may sit on the fence still for some time, while the Japs remain in Burma.

They are not in a hurry. A comfortable life in jail, with the prospect of coming out whenever they choose, as the would be rulers of the country, is hardly a galling position. Their position is really as reassuring as that of a man who gambles with the formula "Head I win—tail you lose." But the party thus doomed to lose in any case is not the British Government. It is the Indian people. Because the British Government will wash its hand after the war as regards India.

One need not attach any great importance to Mr. Churchill's recent rhetorical outburst about the Empire. The British Prime Minister knows as well as any other intelligent man of our time that the Empire as it was before the war will not survive this war. A Commonwealth, in the true sense of the term, is not an Empire even if it embraces a variety of nations belonging to different races professing different religions and situated in different parts of the world. Canada, South Africa and Australia belong to the Empire in that sense. But they are free countries. There should be no objection to India's being satisfied with that status. Because, if the Imperialism of old is to go, isolationist nationalism should not be allowed to survive this war. As a matter of fact, nationalism in our time is an antiquated cult. Its only justification was that it was the reaction to Imperialism. With the disappearance of the latter, the former will have no reason to exist. Yet, there is ground for the apprehension that the disappearance of the two will not be simultaneous. As a matter of fact, while actually liquidating itself, albeit Mr. Churchill's disowning the responsibility, British Imperialism has been carefully nurturing Indian nationalism. The possible triumph of Indian nationalism, not at the cost of British

Imperialism, but under the patronage of the latter, would mean victory of reaction and defeat of democracy in this country. Curiously enough, that disheartening perspective opens itself up before India even more clearly to-day when the progressive and truly democratic people throughout the world, including India, may celebrate the beginning of the end of the military might of the Axis Powers.

As soon as India will be out of the danger of a Japanese invasion, there will no longer be any sense in the sabotage movement for which the Government here as well as in Britain have held the Congress leaders responsible. They will then really do what has been demanded by the Government as the condition for reopening negotiations with them. If in the past the policy of Indian nationalism, particularly of the Congress leaders, was determined by the anxiety not to be in the bad books of the winning party, their future policy will be determined also by the same consideration. As soon as the United Nations will definitely be the winning side to this war, there will be a change of heart on the part of the Congress leaders. Negotiations will be reopened for handing over power to them and to those who will be prepared to tow their line. Thus, even before the last shot is fired on the international war front, Indian leaders who could not be trusted with power in the days of danger may be welcomed to walk in through the doors kept open all the time for them and take up the reins of the Government of the country. All that will be done in the name of democracy. But in reality that will be handing the Indian people over to the tender mercies of native-Fascism. That is the dire fate which awaits India as the crowning crime of dying Imperialism.

Is it not possible to avert that calamity even now? It is possible, if only the British statesmen will remember that India is also entitled to open up a new chapter in her history just as other countries involved in this war. Why should India not be allowed to experience such renovating changes as the passing of the vested interests, together with England? Will it not be only natural that the long relation between the two countries should consummate in helping India to make a similar experience? Why should the bucket be passed on to people who proved themselves to be untrustworthy when the fate of the country hung in the balance? The excuse for this crime against the Indian people is familiar. Power must be passed on to those who have the ear of the people. For one thing, it has been evident, particularly during the last months, that the vocal people, whose ears have been poisoned by racial propaganda, constitute only a tiny minority. Secondly, if the ability to hypnotise a certain section of the people carried with it the right to rule the country and that rule was to be granted the dignity of democracy, then Germany should be left to the tender mercies of Hitler and his party. On this token, Hitler is the greatest democrat and his regime is ideally democratic.

But, really it is not the concern for democracy which makes the British rulers of this country so very anxious to help the establishment of a "National Government" under the suzerainty of the Congress. The British rulers of India have all along been associated with the reactionary elements of the country. These reactionary elements also constitute the social foundation of nationalism. Thus, it is a matter of loyalty to one's own kind. We have characterised this loyalty as morbid love, because the other party failed to be loyal in the most critical days.

Political tendencies making themselves evident as soon as the military situation is turning to the favour of the United Nations give occasion to the apprehension that this war may not be fought out as an international civil war. The international civil war, however, is on the order of the day. It must be fought out before the ideals which are written on the banner of the United Nations could be attained. Therefore, even if this war concludes only as a military conflict, the civil war will continue within national boundaries. The only advantage of a military victory of the United Nations will be to strengthen the position of the progressive and truly democratic elements in some countries. But, at the same time, the result may be just the reverse in others. India promises to be one of these latter.

Before it is too late, the British leaders should be reminded of their responsibility. It is not only to prevent the Indian people falling under Japan, but to see that freedom does not mean Fascism for India. They can discharge their responsibility if they feel it keenly enough. The compromising association with Vichy men may have been necessary for military expediency. Before long, a similar relation may be established with Hitler's generals, for the same reason. But there is no military expediency in India. Therefore, why place in power men who, in the days of distress, showed so very little concern for the cause of the United Nations? There are other people in this country who, by virtue of their staunch devotion to the cause of the United Nations and valiant fight against native Fascism, if not for any other reason, have proved themselves to be the most reliable custodians of the well-being of the Indian people.

The advent of the British had a revolutionary significance for this country. Nationalism is incapable of appreciating the historical value of that event. Therefore, it cannot be the agency through which the long relation between the two countries can be consummated so as to contribute to the elevation of the human community as a whole on a higher level. The consummation must also have a revolutionary significance. Therefore, the agency should be created with a deep understanding of the implications of the situation. If that is done, the fate of India will cease to be gloomy, and a really free India will be able to guarantee the freedom of the rest of the world.

November 29, 1942